Gurumat Siddhant

गुरुमत सिद्धांत

A Science of Spirituality Scripture for Dawn of the Golden Era



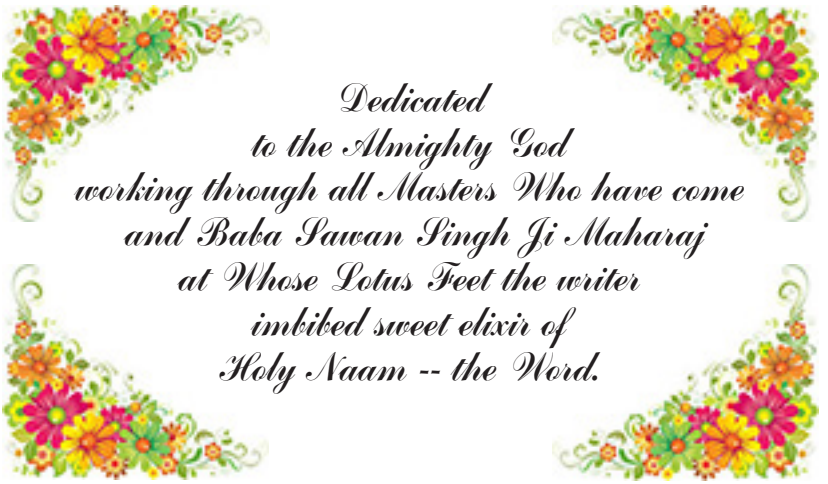
Written by Param Sant Kirpal Singh (R)
Dedicated to Huzur Baba Sawan Singh (L)

Part I-A.

Gurumat Siddhant

(Principles of the Path of Perfect Masters-
Sant-Mat or Surat-Shabd Yoga)

An abridged Translation from the Gurmukhi / Punjabi Original:
'Gurmat Sidhant'


Dedicated
to the Almighty God
working through all Masters Who have come
and Baba Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj
at Whose Lotus Feet the writer
imbibed sweet elixir of
Holy Naam -- the Word.

SUBJECT INDEX

Part I-A

Chapter I – *Sewa* – Service 9

- Physical Service 10
- Service by means of Wealth and Mind 11
- Service by Soul 12
- Method of Service to the Master 17
- Which kind of Service is Desirable? 18
- Who can Serve the Master and the Lord? 19
- Whose Service should be Performed? 20

Chapter II – Previous Actions 23

Chapter III – *Nishkaam Karma* – Action without Desire 33

- Desireless Action 33
- Surrendering Everything to the Lord 39

Chapter IV – *Amrit Vela* – The Period of Elixir 43

Chapter V – *Asanas* – Posture 51

Chapter VI – *Sumiran* or *Simran* – Remembrance or Repetition 57

- What is Simran? 57
- Method of Withdrawing Within Oneself 59
- Method of Simran 62
- Purpose of Simran 66
- Place of Simran 67
- How should one Do Simran 70

- Inner Ascent and Realization through Simran ❋ 74
- Precepts of Simran ❋ 79
- Time for Simran ❋ 81
- The Practice of Repetition of Names is for Everybody ❋ 82
- Fruits of Simran ❋ 83

❁ **Chapter VII – *Dhyan* – Contemplation ▨ 87**

- What is such a Dhyan? ❋ 87
- Contemplation and Religion ❋ 100
- Fruits of Contemplation ❋ 103

❁ **Chapter VIII – *Dhun* – Sound or Melody ▨ 105**

- Dhun comprises Contemplation, Meditation and Knowledge ❋ 107
- Whence do we get Dhun? ❋ 108
- Who is Eligible for Dhun? ❋ 110
- Fruits of Dhun ❋ 110

❁ **Chapter IX – *Jeete-jee Marna* – Dying while Living ▨ 113**

- What Happens at the Time of Death and After? ❋ 115

❁ **Chapter X – *Saccha Satsang* – Company of Truth ▨ 125**

- The Special Advantage of a Saint ❋ 146

❁ **Chapter XI – *Bhakti* – Devotion ▨ 151**

- What is Bhakti? ❋ 152
- Difference between Love and Devotion ❋ 154
- Devotion consists in One-pointed Attention and needs only One Support ❋ 157
- Devotion, Action, Knowledge and Discipline (Bhakti, Karma, Gyan and Yoga) ❋ 159
- Devotion is Natural ❋ 163
- The Principles of Devotion ❋ 164

- Prerequisites for Devotion ❋ 166
- Why should we be devoted? ❋ 167
- To Whom should we be devoted? ❋ 167
- Guru Bhakti – Devotion to the Master ❋ 170
- Devotion to the Master is Difficult ❋ 187
- Devotion to the Master is the Path of Surrender of Self or Ego ❋ 189
- What is the Object of being Devoted to a Master? ❋192
- What Type of Devotion should be Rendered? ❋ 194
- What are the Practices by which we can be successful in Devotion? ❋ 203
- How can Devotion be Achieved? ❋ 207
- Who achieves Bhakti? ❋ 214
- Bhakti – Devotion is not Idleness ❋ 214
- The Signs of Bhakti ❋ 215
- Devotion is not a Physical Sentiment ❋ 217
- Time for Devotional Practice ❋ 217
- The Path of Devotion is open to All ❋ 218
- Devotion is Superior to and Easier than all Religious Ceremonies and Rituals ❋ 220
- Obstacles in the Path of Devotion ❋ 223
- Fruits of Devotion ❋ 224

❋ **Chapter XII – *Virah* – Intense Longing** ▩ **227 - 251**

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SERVICE (*Sewa* सेवा)

Cheerfully carrying out the orders of elders and rendering them physical help for their comfort and convenience is one phase of service. Another phase of it is rendering loving help to the poor and the needy.

The reward of selfless service is great indeed. The saying goes:

कर सेवा और खा मेवा।

Render service and reap the fruit thereof.

Human beings can even become Saints and Swamis through service.

If we render service with an ulterior motive or with pride and arrogance, we are deprived of its real reward. But if we perform service without any desire for reward we can attain great heights.

It is said that the performance of service is one of the methods by which we can achieve glory in the eyes of God. Bhai Gurdas has gone so far as to say that our hands and feet are useless, if they perform no service. And Guru Nanak has stated that a person engaged in selfless service is always highly esteemed in the society of men, as well as in the eyes of God.

Those who render no service to mankind cannot hope to achieve anything in this world or hereafter. One who does not serve his fellow beings is worthless.

According to the Adi Granth, there are four kinds of service:

- Physical or manual service – rendered with the body.
- Service with wealth.
- Service rendered by mind.
- Service rendered by soul.

Physical Service

What type of service should be performed? Guru Amar Das has said that one should render service in the same manner as does an elephant which obeys the directions of the goad of his mahout (driver). In other words, we should consider the command of the Guru, as a goad on our head. We should place our forehead at the feet of the Master and render service to Him with love and devotion, and without hesitation or murmur.

In one of his well-known verses Guru Arjan Dev, the 5th Sikh Guru says,

नैनहु संगि संतन की सेवा चरन झारी केसाइओ।।
आठ पहर दरसनु संतन का सुखु नानक इहु पाइओ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सारंग म० 5, पृ० 1217)

With my eyes I see the Saints, and dedicate myself to serving them. I wash their feet with my hair. Twenty-four hours a day, I gaze upon the Blessed Vision, the Darshan of the Saints – this is the peace and conform which Nanak has received.

केसा का करि बीजना संत चउरु ढुलावउ।।
सीसु निहारउ चरण तलि धूरि मुखि लावउ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सूही म० 5, पृ० 745)

This is the only bliss for which I yearn: I would be happy to make a fan of the hair on my head and wave it to produce a breeze for the comfort of the Saints, and put my head on their feet to receive the dust of their feet upon it.

Guru Ram Das says,

पखा फेरी पाणी ढोवा हरि जन कै पीसणु पीसि कमावा।।
नानक की प्रभ पासि बेनंती तेरे जन देखणु पावा।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सूही म० 5, पृ० 749)

I would wave the fan over them, carry water for them, and grind corn for the humble servants of the Lord. Nanak offers this prayer to God – please grant me the Vision of Your humble servants.

तनु मनु काटि काटि सभु अरपी विचि अगनी आपु जलाई।।
पखा फेरी पाणी ढोवा जो देवहि सो खाई।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सूही म० 4, पृ० 757)

I would cut my mind and body apart into pieces, and offer them all at Your altar; I would burn myself in fire; I would wave the

fan over You, and carry water for You; whatever You give me, would I accept.

वारि वारि जाई गुर ऊपरि पै पैरी संत मनाई।।
नानकु विचारा भइआ दिवाना हरि तउ दरसन कै ताई।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सूही म० 4, पृ० 757)

Lord, I am ever prepared to sacrifice myself to my Master and to fall at His feet. Poor Nanak has gone insane, longing for the Blessed Vision of the Lord's Darshan.

A true disciple is ever eager to visit his Master and adopts all possible means to be in His presence. Even if it is bitter cold and snowing heavily, he is not deterred; for the pull of his Guru (for His Darshan) is so strong that he will go just to have a glimpse of Him. He constantly longs to meet Him and to have His Darshan day and night.

The highest type of service is that to the Master. Guru Arjan says,

तिसु गुर कउ झूलावउ पाखा।। महा अगनि ते हाथु दे राखा।।
तिसु गुर कै ग्रिह ढोवउ पाणी।। जिसु गुर ते अकल गति जाणी।।
तिसु गुर कै ग्रिह पीसउ नीत।। जिसु परसादि वैरी सभ मीत।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी म० 5, पृ० 239)

Whatever service is possible for you to do with your hands for the Master, you should do it, because it is the Master who gives us the protection of His Hands and saves us from the fire of transmigration. You should work for Him, because through Him you will know the Lord. You should ceaselessly serve the Master, because it is by His Grace alone that all foes are transformed into friends.

We are elated by such type of service as are described above. It is a unique joy that cannot be achieved by power and pelf. It is therefore necessary that we should not hanker after worldly pleasures.

Service by means of Wealth and Mind

Service to the Master will be rewarded, only if it is performed with one-pointed attention, because then we achieve concentration of mind. By serving the Master, our heart attains unison with His Heart. Thus, Naam will become manifest in us and we shall be able to meet the Lord

without much further effort. All our desires will be fulfilled, because we shall have no desires left.

Who can serve a Master? In other words, who can attain God-realization? Only such persons can do so, who sacrifice their mind and their wealth for the service of their Guru (Master).

घाल न भानै अंतर बिधि जानै ता की करि मन सेवा।।
करि पूजा होमि इहु मनूआ अकाल मूरति गुरदेवा।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सोरठ म० 5, पृ० 614)

You should therefore serve such a person, who perceives the great devotion and the inner longing of your heart. Such a one is none other than a True Master. You should make an offering of your mind at the altar of your Guru, and worship Him because He is the incarnation of that Deathless One.

He achieves everything, who lives near the Master (is ever conscious of His Presence within), who obeys Him with selfless devotion and without pride, who subdues his mind's reasoning and surrenders himself to his Master.

Service by Soul

This service consists in withdrawing one's soul current from every pore of the body, and connecting it with Shabd शब्द, the Audible Life Stream. By doing this, all practices – devotion, repetition, penances, austerities, etc. – are automatically accomplished, and the ego is destroyed. The aim of all such practices is realized when one surrenders himself to the True Master, who is really God Incarnate. And one can truly surrender only through His Grace and by means of the spiritual practice, which consists in listening to the inner Shabd, the Word or the Audible Life Stream.

We are by now aware of various types of service by the soul. But the soul can render service only through the Grace of God. In order to win His Grace, we should pray to the Saints who are God Incarnate. Thus, it is with the Grace of the Master, that the soul is able to render service.

The ability to merge oneself with the Name of God– Naam नाम, Word, Shabd or the Audible Life Stream – is beyond the comprehension of the intellect. It is therefore only through the Grace of a Master that the soul can render service. And the Master's Grace is invoked when – by means of devotion – the disciple completely renounces his ego.

How can we achieve this? It is possible only when the soul, by means of repetition of the Holy Names given by the Master, goes within by withdrawing itself from the nine outlets of the body, pierces through a star, the sun and the moon, and beholds the Radiant Form of the Master. It then merges in the Shabd – Word, Sound Current – and gradually rises by stages, until it reaches its final Goal. That is the True Service by soul.

Physical and monetary service is easy to perform, and hundreds of people can afford to do so. Mental service is difficult to perform, and there are very few people who are capable of performing it. But service by the soul is much more difficult to perform and rare to achieve.

All these types of service can actually be performed, only if carried out in accordance with the instructions of a Master. The mind is rendered pure by service and then becomes worthy of devotion to Him. Everybody is busy in service of the world. We serve the world, our family, our community and our country. All this is good, so far as it goes and should be performed as a duty, but it cannot help in attaining salvation. On the other hand, if we are attached to these ties, they become the cause of our coming back to this earth again and again.

The highest service is that of the Guru, and it is also the purest. The Guru is free from all tries and attachments. He is an ocean full of the surging waves of love. By serving Him, we become free from ties and attachments to the ephemeral world. Then intense love of God is awakened in us.

One who loves the Lord, also loves His creation. Thus the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man are

realized, and in this manner love is developed in us, not only for God, but for His creation as well.

By serving the Master, we really serve ourselves, because by so doing each and every part of our body is purified. Scriptures mention that by serving the Satguru सत्गुरु (Master), we obtain all the four values: Dharma धर्म (Righteousness), Arth अर्थ (Wealth), Kaam काम (Desires), and Moksha मोक्ष (Salvation). In order to accomplish this, we have to surrender ourselves to a Master.

'Dharma' is that which binds and guides. The world is sustained by Dharma, which is created out of Grace, and is the source of contentment and social harmony. Dharma has ten attributes:

- ***Kshama*** क्षमा - Forgiveness.
- ***Ahimsa*** अहिंसा - Non-Violence, Compassion.
- ***Daya*** दया - Mercy, Piety.
- ***Mridu Vyavahar*** मृदु व्यवहार - Sweet Nature and True Behaviour.
- ***Satya Vachan*** सत्य वचन - Truthfulness.
- ***Tap*** तप - Self-control, Penance.
- ***Daan*** दान - Charity.
- ***Sheel*** शील - Continence.
- ***Shauch*** शौच - Cleanliness.
- ***Nishkaamta*** निष्कामता - Desirelessness.

All these are achieved by keeping the company of Saints. Each religion has its own commandments, but the commandments of all religions include the above ten imperatives. And in all religions, the founder held devotion to the Lord as the ultimate aim. It is therefore noted with regret that nowadays religious places often breed disputes and wrangling, and encourage bigotry and fanaticism. Thus, instead of helping us to reach the highest goal, such institutions become the cause of much evil.

'Arth' means wealth.

'Kaam' means desires in general. By the Grace of the Master, all types of desires – whether worldly or spiritual –

are fulfilled. By being in His company the worldly desires, which are ephemeral, are all effaced; and spiritual desires become very strong. These ardent spiritual desires are fulfilled by His Grace, and are the only desires we should entertain.

'Moksha' means salvation. Saints have themselves achieved salvation and they are able to bestow salvation on their disciples who faithfully follow their instructions. Salvation really means freedom or non-attachment. In other words, attachment consists in mentally binding oneself to something. Releasing oneself from that attachment is salvation. Remaining unattached, while living in the world of attachment, such is the salvation of the Saints. That is to say, living in and performing our duties in the world, but not being of it.

Salvation, in the above sense of non-attachment, is a means and not the goal, because it can be achieved by mental control and by certain practices leading to it. Saints and seers, while living in this world, preach that true salvation (salvation of the Soul) is attained by means of a certain spiritual practice. This practice is called "Surat-Shabd Abhyas सुरत–शब्द अभ्यास," which means the practice of uniting the soul with the Shabd (Word, Sound Current or Audible Life Stream). By means of such practice, one can achieve true salvation even while living in this very body.

जैसे जल महि कमलु निरालमु मुरगाई नै साणे।।
सुरति सबदि भव सागरु तरीऐ नानक नामु वखाणे।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (रामकली म० 1, पृ० 938)

As the lotus flower remains above water while its roots are in the water, and the swan – although it is constantly in the water – flies away with its wings dry, in the same manner, one who performs Surat-Shabd Yoga remains detached from the world and from its influence, while living and working in it.

Kabir says,

जाको गुरु ने रंग दिया कभी न होय कुरंग।
कोटि काल झजकोलई कभी न होत चित भंग।।

-- संत कबीर

One who has been dyed in the Dye of Naam cannot be stained. He may live in the world, perform his worldly duties and activities, but his heart and mind will never waver.

Such a person has drunk so deep from the Fountain of Naam and Guru that, while living in this world, he remains unattached to it. Such devotees are so much attached to their Lord and Master that for them salvation does not have much fascination. They are so happy in being near the Lord, that they do not yearn for salvation.

Man has a physical body. He also has a mind and an intellect, as well as a soul. With the body, he accumulates wealth and all other physical amenities. Body is served by body, and mind is served by mind. But soul is, by far, the most precious of the three. And it is a Master, who gives us the gift of the knowledge of the soul. That is why a person should offer his body, his wealth and his mind to the Master, in order to achieve the gift of Naam.

By serving the Master, we serve our Lord. The scriptures go so far as to say that if you wish to serve your Lord, you should worship your Master, because by so doing you worship the Lord.

How to worship the Master? The scriptures tell us that we should serve the Master with body, wealth, mind and soul. Above all, we should worship Him by Dhyan ध्यान – contemplation/beholding His Radiant Form inside. That is the highest form of worship. It is so comprehensive that all other forms of worship are included in it, and no other form of worship is necessary.

Worship of the Master consists of inculcating in one's mind love for and faith in Him, and devoting oneself to spiritual practice, as instructed by Him.

The best type of service to a Master is devotion to Him. But it is very rare. The Master is actually Shabd-Incarnate 'Word-made-flesh'. Therefore, the best service to the Master is through the soul's union with Shabd. This is done by filling one's mind with Naam, and thereby attaining a state of bliss.

Holy Scriptures enumerate various advantages, which accrue from service to the Master:

Peace and bliss are achieved. The mind is steeped in the dye of Naam and becomes conscious of His immanence. Liberation from Kaal काल (the Negative Power) and his punishment. Various bad karmas and their effects are erased. One achieves all one's desires. All desires are fulfilled. In the end, one attains freedom from birth and death. Without service to the Master, it is not possible to give devotion to the Lord, nor can the mind reap the fruits of concentration. Man becomes eligible to get a human body in his next birth by service and devotion to the Master. Those who serve the Master are invariably sustained by Him at the time of their death, while those who do not serve the Master, waste their life in vain.

Method of Service to the Master

One should serve the Master by withdrawing oneself completely from the ego, and thus attaining humility. Such service alone is pure, and only he can perform it who himself is pure in heart and mind. Those who have crooked natures, who are fraudulent or have bad or ulterior motives are unworthy or unfit to serve the Master.

Guru Arjan says,

दिनु राती आराधहु पिआरो निमख न कीजै ढीला।।
संत सेवा करि भावनी लाईऐ तिआगि मानु हाठीला।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गूजरी म० 5, पृ० 498)

We should worship God day and night. In this, there should be no lethargy or negligence. And the way to worship the Lord is through worship of the Master with love and devotion, having abjured pride and obduracy.

The service should be incessant and not spasmodic. One cannot calculate its worth in terms of money; and if thus calculated or done with any ulterior motive, it is worthless and merits no reward.

Which kind of Service is Desirable?

Everybody serves a Master in his own way. But what kind of service is gainful and deserving of merit? Guru Ram Das says,

सा सेवा कीती सफल है जितु सतिगुर का मनु मंने।।
जा सतिगुर का मनु मंनिआ ता पाप कसमल भंने।।
-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी की वार म० 3, पृ० 314)

Only such service as is acceptable and pleasing to the Master is rewarding. And if He is pleased, all our evil karmas are obliterated.

सो सतगुरू सा सेवा सतगुर की सफल है जिस ते पाईऐ परम निधानु।।
जो दूजै भाइ साकत कामना अरथि दुरगंध सरेवदे सो निहफल सभु अगिआनु।।
-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सूही म० 4, पृ० 734)

He is the True Guru. Service to the True Guru is fruitful and rewarding. By this service, the greatest treasure is obtained. The faithless cynics, in their love of duality and sensual desires, harbour foul-smelling urges. They are totally unsuccessful and remain ignorant.

How do we know that our service to the Master has been rewarded? Any service, which helps us in listening to the Sound Current within, is a real and rewarding service. The Adi Granth states:

गुरमुखि सेवा घाल जिनि घाली।। तिसु घड़ीऐ सबदु सची टकसाली।।
-- आदि ग्रन्थ (भैरउ म० 4, पृ० 1134)

A Gurumukh, who serves and works hard, is cast in the true mint of the Shabd, the Word of God.

Of all types of service in the world, service to the Master is acceptable in the Court of the Lord, because by such worship, one can gain admittance into His Court.

जो गुर कउ जनु पूजे सेवे सो जनु मेरे हरि प्रभ भावै।।
हरि की सेवा सतिगुरु पूजहु करि किरपा आपि तरावै।।
-- आदि ग्रन्थ (मलार म० 4, पृ० 1264)

Such persons as serve and worship the Master, thereby worship the Lord and gain His favour. If you ever wish to please the Lord, worship thou thy Master. He, with his mercy, gives liberation.

We should worship the Master and thereby throw all responsibility for our salvation on His shoulders. Truly

speaking, the Master is God incarnate, and by worshipping the Master, we worship the Lord.

Who can Serve the Master and the Lord?

Only such a one is in a position to serve the Master, who has an abundant Grace of the Lord, because this service is imprinted on the individual's forehead and was preordained as the result of his previous life's actions or karmas.

He is fortunate indeed, who devotes himself to the service to his Master, because the Lord Himself is manifest in Him. And only that person can serve the Master, whom the Lord ordains.

Service has many rewards, but the unique one is that a person imbibes the qualities of the person, whom he serves.

Service should be performed with devotion and reverence. When there is love in the heart and reverence in the eyes, then God-realization becomes easy to achieve.

A disciple should serve his Master without arrogance and without any idea of reward, and always with the aim of pleasing the Master. By this method, his mind will always be contemplating the Master. And if you contemplate on a person intensely, you will one day imbibe the qualities of that person.

A person, who destroys his ego, implicitly obeys his Master and worships the Lord with focused attention, is always dear to Him.

Actually, a true disciple is one, who serves his Master and works according to the wishes of his Master. And it is in him that Shabd becomes manifest. All the difficulties of such a person are automatically resolved and his desires are fulfilled. However, it is very difficult to attain such a state, because it can only come with the unbounded Grace of the Master.

Serving the Master is superior to all types of penance, all types of prayers, all types of recitals, and all types of pilgrimages by which man tries to purify himself.

Whose Service should be Performed?

It is written in Scriptures that we should serve Him, who has created the entire world and who has given life to us, because through His service alone, can we derive true benefit and gain honour in the Court of the Lord. Therefore, we should serve only the One Lord, who has no equal, who provides us with food and shelter, who gives us father and mother, family and children, who is present in water on land and everywhere, and who grants livelihood to all. We should sacrifice everything in favour of His service, because by serving Him, we shall be free from the cycle of births and deaths.

Except for the service of the Lord, all pilgrimages, all holy baths in sacred waters, and all other types of worship are meaningless. If you serve other beings, you serve with some ulterior motive, but real service to God is not for material or other gains. Therefore, we should serve God out of sheer love for and devotion to Him. Otherwise, it is just like drinking a cup of poison while discarding the cup filled with Ambrosia, and putting ourselves to all kinds of difficulties and privations. All other kinds of service lead nowhere and are without any profit or purpose.

Man should, therefore, search for a Perfect Master who is able to give him the gift of Naam, the greatest of all Gifts, because by this gift we are freed from the shackles of coming and going. And we should have, as our aim of service, only the love of God and His Saints, who are God-Incarnate.

The house (the body) that is devoid of such service is like a cemetery. But the service of the Saints is possible only through the abundant Grace of the Lord. And those who perform this service without ego, receive all the blessings of the Lord as well as of the Master, who is the embodiment of the Lord. A study of the ancient history of India will reveal that in Sat Yuga सत–युग (the True or Golden Age) and in Treta Yuga त्रेता–युग (the Silver Age), education was imparted by the Masters in places far removed from human habitations, and the student was wholly occupied physically, mentally

and spiritually in the service of his Master. In the third yuga, that is the Dwapar द्वापर–युग (Copper or Bronze Age), this type of education began to disappear slowly and in its place, idol worship started. In Kali Yuga कलि–युग (the Iron Age), which is the present age, such rendering of service to the Master has altogether disappeared, except in the case of a rare few.

Even in the epic poem, Mahabharata, Arjuna was told by Lord Krishna in the famous Song Celestial known as Bhagavad Gita, about objective and subjective actions. In a nutshell, it amounts to saying that if a person offers all his actions at the altar of his Master, then whatever action he performs is without any punishment, and he will without doubt obtain release from the cycle of transmigration.

But now, in this formidable Kali Yuga (the Iron Age), God Almighty, in His abundant Grace, has sent His own Incarnations and Param Sants namely, Kabir, Guru Nanak and others, into this world to preach the doctrine of Master-Disciple Service. This tradition of Master-Disciple relationship continues today. m



PREVIOUS ACTIONS (*Karma* कर्म)

In India, almost all religions and communities, namely, Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs, and others, believe that a person undergoes pain or pleasure as a result of his own previous actions, and he bears the consequences of the actions performed in his present life, in the future.

Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans do not believe in the transmigration of the soul, nor in the Law of Karma. They believe that God is the Creator and the Lord of the entire universe. Just as a potter makes a pot or unmakes it at his will and the pot has no say in the matter, so is it up to God either to grant salvation to His creatures or to keep them all in ignorance. It is also their belief that since God is independent, nobody has the right or power to interfere with His actions nor does anybody know about His doings. These matters are beyond human ken and would best be left alone.

But the Saints in India have very clearly indicated the pros and cons of the Law of Karma. It is a theory of cause and effect, which operates throughout the universe. Emerson and other philosophers, and also professors of physics, have called it the Law of Compensation.

As ye sow, so shall ye reap.

Whatever a person speaks, has a two-fold effect. One is the action, and the other is the reaction. The reaction resounds in and near the speaker, and creates the same type of thought-currents in his environment. Thus whatever thoughts – virtuous or wicked – emanate from him, they engender their exact resonance. This is an inviolable and unrelenting law, which operates in connection with both animate and inanimate objects alike. It cannot be erased.

Karma is also a process of working out one's credits and debits. If we take from somebody, we have to give to him in return, and under this principle, fate karmas are formed; and by this, our ups and downs in life can be explained. Pleasure and pain, poverty and riches, sickness and health, taking and giving, are all the result of such actions and have to be paid for. If one is not able to pay off in this life, he will have to do so, in some future life.

A person dies, but the scroll of his actions does not perish. The account of all such deeds is imprinted upon the soul which, after death, is still enveloped in an astral body. The soul leaves the body at death, but the accounts remain with it, until they are cleared.

In Hindu philosophy this is known as 'Awagawan' आवागवन or 'Chaurasi' चौरासी, meaning the coming and going into the eighty-four lakh (8.4 million) species of life. The Mohammedans call it 'Tanasukh'. Saints of all communities have accepted and preached the principle of transmigration. Shams-i-Tabriz, a Saint, says,

बारहा मिस्ले–गियाह रोइदा अम,
हफ़्तो दो हफ़्ताद क़ालिब दीदा अम।

I have grown a number of times as a blade of grass, and I have seen the eighty-four sides of life.

Shams-i-Tabriz also says,

सद नक़्श नमूदेम दरीं आलमे–ख़ुद रा,
हरदम बदिगर सूरतो–अज़ बहरे–हुमाएम।

-- दीवाने-शम्स तब्रेज़ (पृ० 205)

We live in this universe, and in various births we wear different garbs. Sometimes we come into one of the species and sometimes into another, but we are all a part of the Creator. In other words, we came into this world and we left this world hundreds and thousands of times, because this universe is a workshop with exits and entrances.

Again:

ऐ मर्दमां ऐ मर्दमां बेरूं अज़ीं मादर पिदर,
मन नुह पिदर रा याफ़्तम मन चार मादर दीदा अम।

-- कुल्लियाते-शम्स तब्रेज़ (पृ० 507)

O man, apart from my present parents, I have had nine fathers and have seen fourteen mothers.

जाने–ख़ुद सरमस्ते–जानां दीदा अम, ईं जमां अज़ आशियां परींदा अम।
ऐ पिसर अंदर सिपिहरे–हफ़्तमीं, बा मलाइक सालहा गरदीदा अम।
गर बिगोयम शरहे–जाने–ख़्वेश रा, नुसहदो–हफ़्ताद क़ालिब दीदा अम।

-- कुल्लियाते-शम्स तब्रेज़ (पृ० 548)

I have also seen myself happy in the devotion of my Lord. Even now, I have flown away from my real Abode. O my sons, I have lived in the seventh heaven with gods for many ages. If I were to tell you the entire story of my births and deaths, I would say that I appeared in seventy different species. And if you were to inquire from me the story of my past lives, then I would say that I have grown a number of times as a vegetable.

Further, Maulana Rumi says,

ईं नास्त तनासुख़ सुखने–वहदत महज़ अस्त,
कज़ जोशिशे–आं कुल्ज़मे–ज़ख़्ख़ार बर आमद।
यक क़तरा अज़ां बहर जुदा शुद किह् जुदा नीस्त,
चूं आदम अज़ीं ख़मराए–फ़ख़्ख़ार बर आमद।

-- दीवाने-शम्स तब्रेज़ (पृ० 85)

Transmigration is simply the coming of the soul into different species to enable it to carry out its allotted task according to its own karma. The soul emerges from the great Ocean of Life, and returns to it. It is a drop from this ocean and assumes a human form, after which it goes back and merges itself into its Original Home.

The Negative Power has created a vast web of transmigration, which is woven around three gunas गुण (qualities), and in that net actions with their reactions play a very prominent part. Tulsidas Ji says,

करम प्रधान बिस्व करि राखा। जो जस करइ सो तस फलु चाखा।

-- श्रीरामचरितमानस (2:218:4)

As is the action, so is the reward.

We are all bound down by our fate karmas. Many people are good, and they perform good actions because of their fate karmas. Others are bad and perform bad actions on account of their fate karmas. They are all powerless to do otherwise. Even if an opportunity to do a good deed comes their way,

they ignore it. They do not feel the necessity of the Master and the Lord.

Satsang is essential for spiritual progress. Good as well as bad persons are influenced by Satsang and make progress because of it, each according to the three gunas predominant in him.

None of the species below the human form is free to act. But human beings have freedom of action, consistent with their fate karmas. They can, therefore, take advantage of the power of freedom of action to a certain extent.

But the question arises, as to how can one do it? By attending Satsang सत्संग and by fully imbibing its teachings, we are able to gain freedom from some of our karmas. However, the shackles of our karmas, or the results of our own actions, are very strong. Even incarnations (gods and goddesses) are not free from them.

The Law of Transmigration is irrevocable, and the results of good or bad actions are borne, even by Brahma himself.

In the time of Kabir Sahib, the great Sage, Ramanand, who was aware of all his previous lives, knew that since in a previous life, he had impaled a rabbit on his spear and dragged it for some distance, he was to pay for that deed in his present life. It so happened that the same rabbit came back to this world as a human being and was a Minister to the King at the time. Whenever Ramanand thought of the dire consequences of his previous action, he would tremble and become unhappy. One day Kabir Sahib asked Ramanand the reason for his anguish. Ramanand then spoke out his heart and related the whole story of the previous life, as well as the fact that he was to die by being impaled on the spear of the Minister and dragged through the streets until the last breath of his life.

Kabir Sahib assured Ramanand that he would help him, and then went to the house of the Minister and remained waiting outside his gate. One day the Minister asked Kabir

the reason for his squatting there day after day, and Kabir Sahib narrated the whole story to him.

The Minister was also an evolved soul, and had knowledge of this incident in a previous life. He assured Kabir Sahib that although it was not possible for him to remit the punishment of death for Ramanand, he would not have him dragged. When Ramanand was told about this, he heaved a sigh of relief. History tells us that in due course, the country was invaded by Sikandar Lodi, and while Ramanand was sitting at his window, he was shot dead by the Minister during the attack on the city.

The principle of the karmic law, or action and reaction, has been described in the Adi Granth in terms of Prarabdh प्रारब्ध or Fate karmas. It has been said that we are all helpless in the face of our fate karmas. Whatever a man does as a result of his Prarabdh, he does under the influence of his fate karmas. Such is the irrevocable law of the Negative Power.

सोई कमु कमावणा कीआ धुरि मउलै।।
तुधहु बाहरि किछु नही नानकु गुण बोलै।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (मारू म० 5, पृ० 1102)

People do the deeds as they are pre-ordained to do. Without You, there is nothing at all. Nanak chants Your Glorious Praises.

Guru Amar Das Ji has also said,

आपे करि वेखै मारगि लाए भाई तिसु बिनु अवरु न कोई।।
जो धुरि लिखिआ सु कोइ न मेटै भाई करता करे सु होई।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सोरठ म० 3, पृ० 601)

God Himself forces His creatures into destined paths of karmas (fruits of previous action) over which they have no control and which cannot be effaced. Whatever is destined to take place, must take place.

संजोगु विजोगु दुइ कार चलावहि लेखे आवहि भाग।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (जप जी म० 1, पृ० 6)

Meeting and separation come by His Will. We come to receive what is written in our destiny. (Jap Ji)

It is also as a result of previous actions, that we incarnate as human beings or as lower species. All this, as well

as our meeting and parting, is in accordance with our fate karmas. Whatever has been ordained, will be performed by us. But from Satsang सत्संग we get solace and sustenance. We meet a Master, only if we are destined to do so. It is through His noble company alone, that we receive the Elixir of Naam नाम and attain God-realization.

Our inner eye is shut, and we have imprisoned ourselves behind high and thick walls. We make ourselves subject to the dictates of our own mind, rather than to the advice of the Saints. If we are destined to meet a Master, we do meet him, surrender ourselves to him and follow His Path. We repeat the Holy Names and we love Him. As a result, we behold the Light of Naam within.

नानक करमु होवै मुखि मसतकि लिखिआ होवै लेखु।।
अठिसठि तीरथ गुर की चरणी पूजै सदा विसेखु।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (माझ म० 1, पृ० 147)

If your fate karmas justify meeting a Master, then alone we meet Him, and following the Path, we worship at His Feet and gain more merit than by going on the pilgrimage of sixty-eight holy places.

नामु धिआइन्हि रंग सिउ गुरमुखि नामि लगंन्हि।।
धुरि पूरबि होवै लिखिआ गुर भाणा मंनि लएन्हि।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सूही म० 3, पृ० 757)

The Gurumukhs meditate on the Naam, and remained linked to Naam. Whatever is pre-ordained, accept it as the Will of the Guru.

We are powerless to change our destiny. Whatever is destined to our fate must happen. We shall meet the Master and remember the Lord, only if we are destined to do so. People who follow the dictates of the mind, have worldly thoughts and objects dominating them. And those who follow the dictates of a Master, have the predisposition for God-realization imprinted on their minds.

आवै जाइ भवाईऐ पइऐ किरति कमाइ।।
पूरबि लिखिआ किउ मेटीऐ लिखिआ लेखु रजाइ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सिरीराग म० 1, पृ० 59)

The Cycle of Transmigration is dreadful, and it is beyond the comprehension of human intellect. The possibility of escape from fear of death is in the hands of the Supreme Creator, Sat Nam. The individual is incapable of breaking these fetters of karmas. Freedom from them lies in the hands of God, and by the Grace of the Lord alone are the shackles broken, for not even a small leaf can move without His Will.

किरतु निंदक का धुरि ही पइआ।। नानक जो तिसु भावै सोई थिआ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी सुखमनी म० 5, पृ० 280)

The fate of the slanderer is pre-ordained from the very beginning of time. O Nanak, whatever pleases God, in His Will, comes to pass.

There are people who are not destined to meet a Master in this life on account of their fate karmas. Such people would not care to meet a Master, even if He were in their very midst. As a result of such an attitude, and on account of their fate karmas, they continue their wandering in the cycle of births and deaths in various species.

Fate karmas are the result of actions in our past lives, as is repeatedly and vividly brought out in the Adi Granth. Our fate is imprinted on our foreheads through these previous karmas.

What is really meant by "past karmas"? The Scriptures tell us that God gives us a physical body – either in the human form or in that of a lower specie – and we come into this world, in order to reap the fruits of an allotted portion of our past karmas. In whatever manner He wishes us to do this task, we do exactly that way, because that is the way it is written in our fate.

सरब जीआ सिरि लेखु धुराहू बिनु लेखै नही कोई जीउ।।
आपि अलेखु कुदरति करि देखै हुकमि चलाए सोई जीउ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सोरठ म० 1, पृ० 598)

Nobody can escape one's destiny or fate. God alone is free and He manages the whole world by His Command.

सभु जीउ पिंडु दीआ तुधु आपे तुधु आपे कारै लाइआ।।
जेहा तूं हुकमु करहि तेहे को करम कमावै जेहा तुधु धुरि लिखि पाइआ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सूही म० 4, पृ० 736)

All beings have the writ of fate on their head, and none is devoid of it. However, the Lord, who creates the world and governs it under His Will, alone is without it

We understand that innumerable souls are living in Sat Lok – the region of Pure Spirit, free from dissolution, and also in the lower regions, which are subject to dissolution. What was the previous karma or action, as a result of which these souls were placed in one region or the other? How did these regions come into existence? When were they created? The answers to all these questions are beyond the limits of time and space, and it is not possible for anybody to find them. We can only, in all humility, ask Him, who is the Creator of this universe and who sent the souls into these regions. God is beyond causality, the law of cause and effect; therefore we cannot comprehend Him.

Hafiz says,

जलवागाहे–रखे,

ऊ दीदाए–मन तनहा नीस्त माहो–खुर्शीद हमीं आईना मीगरदानंद।

-- दीवाने-हाफ़िज़ (पृ० 148)

You should think only of the bliss, which you get from the Naam of your Master, and should pay no attention to the secrets of this universe, nor of the regions beyond, for all this is beyond the ken of intellect.

If one is in a house that is on fire, he will first think of the quickest way of getting out of it, before enquiring as to who set the house on fire and when it was set on fire. The answers to these questions can be determined after he has escaped from the burning house. In the same manner, we can find the answers to these questions after we have achieved our goal. The only thought that should occupy us at present is how to terminate this bondage and attachment.

Then why should we ask, "Why is this Path?" "Why is that Goal?" "How and when were this Goal and this Path made?" All this will be solved automatically, when we reach our destination. At present, the only possible answer to all these questions that arise in the mind is that God created all this out of His own Free Will.

Whatever actions are performed by the souls that have been sent to the regions of dissolution, their fruit will constitute their fate, written in indelible letters by the pen of our Lord God. And by that fate, the souls have been sent into the upper or lower regions. It has become their destiny, as a result of actions performed in their previous lives. It can be said with certainty that the souls, which descended into the regions of dissolution and then ascended to the highest regions by the Grace of God, are superior to the souls residing in the upper regions.

The scriptures of the Muslims and the Christians have stated that God has created man superior to all gods and goddesses, who must bow before him. This is a concession that He has granted to the souls that degenerated from Him into the human form.

Action is in the hands of the one who performs it, but the Grace and the Blessing of God are the right of only a few, gained through His Mercy alone. It is no doubt true that human beings have freedom of action to a certain extent, but the key of such actions is in His Hands. And so long as we do not have His Grace, we poor mortals have no power to achieve anything, less so to realize Him.

It follows therefore that the Originator and the root of all actions is God Himself, and He cannot be realized by our own efforts alone. We can realize Him, only within ourselves by the Grace of a Master. Grain is ground when put between the two parts of a grindstone, except the few grains that fall into the central shaft and thus are saved from being ground into flour. Similarly, we are saved from the cycle of births and deaths, if we cling to God and enjoy His Grace and Blessing. m



ACTION WITHOUT DESIRE

(*Nishkaam Karma* निष्काम कर्म)

Desireless Action

Before we are able to understand the doctrine or the principle of desireless "action", we must understand what really is meant by the word action. Action means something done. Before you do anything, there is a desire, an intention or an urge in your mind. The desire is first formed within the mind, and then it is executed outside. A simple example will make this clear:

A person got it into his head that he wished to kill another person. This constituted his intention or internal action. In order to execute or fulfil the desire, he took up a weapon and killed the man. This was the external execution of that internal action. The internal action emits certain currents (the effects are in one's aura, even if one does not execute the action externally), so that it makes a deep impression, not only on his mind, but also causes a disturbance in the environment around him.

We should therefore keep careful watch over our mind and consider how we can attain the state of desireless action. The teachings of the Saints and those contained in our religious scriptures enable us to make the proper choice.

Guru Arjan Dev says,

सेवा करत होइ निहकामी।। तिस कउ होत परापति सुआमी।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी सुखमनी म० 5, पृ० 286)

One who performs selfless service shall attain his Lord and Master.

Action plays a great part in spiritual matters. A man has a physical body, but he acts through his mind. Whatever mental attitude one has, becomes manifested in

action. "Thought is the keynote of our success", was said by the great philosopher, Emerson. Therefore, the actions of a person are governed by his thoughts. And good or bad actions are the results of the same degree of good or bad thoughts, which he entertains.

Consequently, a person becomes a good person or a bad one as a result of his good or bad actions. And all this is done in accordance with one's own desires. Actions, therefore, mould our lives in virtuous or evil directions, so long as we perform such actions with desire.

All religions have laid great emphasis on desireless actions. The Bhagavad Gita, or the Song of the Lord, is replete with teachings of desirelessness or desireless action. It says,

वीतरागभयक्रोधा मन्मया मामुपाश्रिताः।
बहवो ज्ञानतपसा पूता मद्भावमागताः।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (4:10)

Being freed from attachment, fear and anger, becoming fully absorbed in God, and taking refuge in God, many persons in the past became purified by knowledge of God, and thus they attained His Divine Love.

Hindu philosophy also teaches that in order to attain salvation, it is necessary to get rid of all desires and the fruits of all worldly actions caused by such desires. The same teaching of karmaless action is contained in all holy books.

In the Bhagavad Gita we find:

सर्वभूतस्थमात्मानं सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि।
ईक्षते योगयुक्तात्मा सर्वत्रसमदर्शनः।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (6:29)

The aim of human life is that a man should put his mind to yogic action. He should have fraternal thoughts for all fellow beings and should consider himself to be present in all, while everything pervades in him.

Lord Krishna says,

बुद्धया विशुद्ध युक्तो धृत्यात्मानं नियम्य च।
शब्दादीन्विषयांस्त्यक्त्वा रागद्वेषौ व्युदस्य च।।

- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (18:51)

O Arjuna, under the influence of your ego, you believe that you should not fight. This idea of yours is fallacious, because the action which you do not wish to perform, you will have to do under the compulsion of your nature.

It is most difficult to understand the basic principles of Karma Yoga. You will find two viewpoints: One is that an action can only be performed through intention or desire, and without these, no action can be executed (because whenever a person acts, it is difficult for him to get rid of the thought of reward or punishment). If, therefore, a person wishes to perform a desireless action, he can only do so by complete detachment from the world.

The Gita also says that it is not possible to give up the outer actions, so long as the internal desires are not killed.

तस्मादसक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर।
असक्तो ह्याचरन्कर्म परमाप्नोति पूरुषः।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (3:19)

Giving up attachment, perform actions as a matter of duty; for by working without being attached to the fruits, one attains the Supreme.

Actually, a true Sanyasi संन्यासी (Anchorite) is one who has renounced all his desires. So long as a man has not achieved such a state of desirelessness, he should act and leave the results of all his actions in the hands of his Almighty Father. In that way, he will not be subject to the consequences of his actions. In addition to this, he should engage himself in spiritual practice according to the instructions of a Perfect Master, because when he has made some progress on the Spiritual Path, his karmas will begin to disappear.

If it were necessary to renounce everything in this world, in order to obtain the state of desirelessness, it would be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, for everyone to be able to do so. Very few indeed would be able to achieve it, and all praise would be due them.

At the moment, however, we have to consider how the large majority of people who regard such renunciation as

beyond their reach, should achieve desireless karma. For such persons, it is necessary to perform all action in the Name of God.

To obtain release from the fetters of karma, it would be necessary for such persons to engage in spiritual practice according to the instructions of a Perfect Master, and to inculcate in themselves the spirit of devotion to the Lord and the Master.

Actually, all actions that are performed under the influence of the ego – whether good or bad – are equally responsible for the ties of attachment, which bind an individual to this world. Even in the Gita, it is stated that good and bad actions are equally responsible for binding a person.

पाप पुण्य हैं दोऊ बेरी। एक लोहे एक कंचन केरी।।
बेरी पाय एक दुख होई। कंचन ते सुख अधिक न सोई।।

-- उग्रगीता, कबीर सागर (अ० 16)

The karmic fetters may be of iron or may be of gold, but both have the same effect of binding.

Good actions may temporarily give us a reward in heaven, and bad actions may bring us the punishment of hell, but the bondage of transmigration remains. So long as a person considers himself to be the doer, he is weighed down by the shackles of karma.

A person who renounces all desires and the fruits of all his actions, becomes independent of all actions and their results.

यस्य नाहङ्क्रतो भावो बुद्धिर्यस्य न लिप्यते।
हत्वापि स इमाँल्लोकान्न हन्ति न निबध्यते।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (18:17)

O Arjuna, one whose mind has no thought that 'I am doing it' and whose mind is not engrossed in worldly attachments and worldly desires, such a person – even if he should kill everybody – does not kill anybody and is not bound by the result of his action. (Gita)

To say,

दूरेण ह्यवरं कर्म बुद्धियोगाद्धनञ्जय।
बुद्धौ शररणमन्विच्छ कृपणाः फलहेतवः।।

– श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (2:49)

The state of 'I am action-less' is easy, but to be able to achieve this is most difficult. O Arjuna, renounce all self-interest and consider reward and punishment alike. Engage yourself in spiritual practice and then perform the action. Such action is free from effect, and you should perform all your actions in this manner. (Bhagavad Gita)

बुद्धियुक्तो जहातीह उभे सुकृतदुष्कृते।
तस्माद्योगाय युज्यस्व योगः कर्मसु कौशलम्।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (2:50)

A person who attains this state of mind is free from both sin and virtue. You should, OArjuna, always act in such a manner, because it is this type of action, which is called 'Karma Yoga', the science of Karmaless (Re-action-less) Action. (Bhagavad Gita)

कर्मजं बुद्धियुक्ता हि फलं त्यक्त्वा मनीषिणः।
जन्मबन्धविनिर्मुक्ताः पदं गच्छन्त्यनामयम्।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (2:51)

Those persons who do karmas (actions) in this manner are freed from the ties of transmigration and attain the highest form of Salvation. (Bhagavad Gita)

Then Arjuna asks:

ज्यायसी चेत्कर्मणस्ते मता बुद्धिर्जनार्दन।
तत्किं कर्मणि घोरे मां नियोजयसि केशव।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (3:1)

O Lord, if you hold that detachment of mind is superior to karma, then why do you thrown me into the whirlpool of actions? (Bhagavad Gita)

Lord Krishna replies:

न कर्मणामनारम्भान्नैष्कर्म्यं पुरुषोऽश्नुते।
न च सन्यसनादेव सिद्धिं समधिगच्छति।।
कर्मेन्द्रियाणि संयम्य य आस्ते मनसा स्मरन्।
इन्द्रियार्थान्विमूढ़ात्मा मिथ्याचारः स उच्यते।।
यस्त्विन्द्रियाणि मनसा नियम्यारभतेऽर्जुन।
कर्मेन्द्रियैः कर्मयोगमसक्तः स विशिष्यते।।

नियतं कुरु कर्म त्वं कर्म ज्यायो ह्यकर्मणः।
शरीरयात्रापि च ते न प्रसिद्धयेदकर्मणः।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (3:4, 6-8)

Man does not become karmaless (without action) by simply renouncing actions or by not doing them, because a man cannot live even for a moment without doing some action. The mental currents create actions in man at all times. One, who forcibly suppresses his physical self from performing actions is deceiving himself, for his mind cannot be restrained permanently in this manner. Therefore, that person is really great, who conquers his mind by withdrawing it from worldly desires and thus acts with disinterest as far as the fruit of action is concerned, but being interested in serving the Lord only. He performs his prescribed duties as indicated in his moral or religious code, because to act is far better than not to act. The body is given to us for the purpose of action, both internal and external. (Gita)

Action is inherent in the mind, and in the body. So long as the mind is not conquered, it is difficult, if not impossible, to be karmaless. Mind is restless. It is impossible to make it motionless even for a second. Therefore, it is impossible for anyone to be free from mental or physical action.

We have to act for the benefit of our own body and for the benefit of others. Otherwise, we would be a burden on society. Therefore, it is essential for human beings to act. History reveals that Saints have always practiced and approved of such actions. To remain "action-less" while acting is the main puzzle, which must be clearly understood.

A person, who has conquered his mind, will be able to control his physical actions. One who is free from attachment and hatred is a genuinely karmaless person. The Gita lays great emphasis on the ideal of surrendering oneself to the Lord in order to become action-less.

पिताहमस्य जगतो माता धाता पितामहः।
वेद्यं पवित्रमोङ्कार ऋक्सामयजुरेव च।।
गतिर्भर्ता प्रभुः साक्षी निवासः शरणं सुहृत्।
प्रभवः प्रलयः स्थानं निधानं बीजमव्ययम्।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (9:17-18)

Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you give, whatever you worship, whatever penances you perform, O Arjuna, surrender them all to me, because by doing so you will be free from the consequences of actions (you will be action-less) and, traversing the path of renunciation, you will attain liberation and will merge in me. (Gita)

Surrendering Everything to the Lord

This is the first step towards the path of devotion because if everything is surrendered to Him in all humility, we are released from the load of karmas and become worthy of realizing Him within. But so long as the record of karmas is not obliterated internally by destroying our ego, we cannot go beyond the three gunas गुण (qualities), and consequently cannot become actionless. Actions are pure, only if performed without any desire for reward. And one, who performs his actions in this manner, is action-less, even while acting. Such a person achieves God-realization.

How can we attain this re-actionless state? How can a person be released from the bondage of attachment? How can the cycle of births and deaths, which is the necessary consequence of our actions, be made to cease? And who can understand the enigma of 're-actionless action', even while acting? All these questions are answered in the scriptures by a simple reply to the effect that these things can be understood, only if one becomes a Gurumukh.

What is a Gurumukh? – one who surrenders himself to a Guru (Master); that is, one who lovingly and implicitly follows the instructions of a Guru. The Guru bestows the gift of Naam, by the practice of which, one goes beyond the reach of the three gunas (qualities), burns away his ego, and attains the true state of actionlessness. Thus, by the Grace of the Master, the load of karmas is lightened.

Karma or action, is of three kinds: Sanchit संचित, Prarabdh प्रारब्ध and Kriyaman क्रियमान. Sanchit is the store karma; Prarabdh is the fate karma; and Kriyaman is the fruit karma.

Sanchit or Store karmas are the results of actions of past lives, which have not yet been paid for nor assigned. Prarabdh or Fate karmas constitute that portion of the results of actions in past lives which have been allotted to our present life, and on account of which this human body has been given to us, that is, for undergoing the results of good and bad karmas according to our fate. Kriyaman constitutes the new karmas resulting from actions which we perform in this life. In other words, while undergoing our destiny (fate karmas) we are daily incurring new karmas as well, the results of which will be undergone in the next life as fate, or part as fate and part as Sanchit, in some future life.

Our own actions are responsible for the good and the evil, the pleasure and the pain that we undergo, as well as for our being born into this world in a high or a low species. As ye sow, so shall ye reap. We are happy as a result of good actions, because we must bear the fruit of our own actions in thought, word and deed.

One cannot escape the result of his actions by performing them in secret. The consequences of such actions have to be borne some time or other. It is therefore clear that whatever weal or woe, joy or sorrow we experience, it is all due to our own actions, and we should not blame anyone else for it. How can a person hope to achieve good results out of bad actions? Anyone who does so, is labouring under a mistaken idea.

Dhritarashtra (a king who was blind from birth) was once asked to what action in a past life he ascribed his blindness. He replied that he could see as far back as all the actions of his past one hundred lives, and in all these lives there was no act, which could have resulted in his blindness. Lord Krishna then granted him his own inner vision for the purpose of seeing beyond his last one hundred lives. Only then did Dhritarashtra find that in well over a hundred lives back, he had performed a bad deed, for which he was born blind in this life.

What can one do about the store of karmas lying latent through hundreds of past lives? The cycle of karmas is constantly on the move, and the results of our actions are brought forth and have to be paid for, even after hundreds and thousands of lives.

The ocean of karmas is fathomless. It is almost impossible to obliterate all the store karmas. But when we meet a true Master, He clears the accounts of all our karmas by inculcating in us the spirit of doing actions without any thought of reward. When we do our spiritual practice according to the instructions of the Master and surrender ourselves completely to Him, we cheerfully undergo our Fate karmas and create no new karmas to be undergone in a future life. The Store karmas are gradually destroyed by the practice of Naam नाम or Shabd शब्द. Sometimes the Master helps us in bearing the load of our Fate karmas, so that what might have been a fatal stab becomes a pinprick, with the result that we undergo our karmas without much pain or mental anguish.

In this manner all our karmas are eventually liquidated by the Grace of the Master. At last we are relieved of the load of karmas and achieve salvation by crossing the ocean of life. Only while living in this world and doing desireless actions, do we become 'action-less'. m

4

THE HOURS OF ELIXIR
(*Amrit Vela* अमृत–वेला)

The Hindu Shastras have described the early morning hours as auspicious and as God's own time. The last three hours of night are known as the Time of Elixir, for this pure and serene time was utilized for meditation by the ancient true Yogis and Saints. Even in the Adi Granth, the value of this part of the morning has been highly extolled. Guru Nanak, in particular, has eulogized the uniqueness and efficacy of the Time of Elixir for meditation and devotion to Naam.

अंमृत वेला सचु नाउ वडिआई वीचारु।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (जप जी म० 1, पृ० 2)

In the Amrit Vela, the ambrosial hours before dawn, chant the True Name, and contemplate His Glorious Greatness. (Jap Ji)

जागना जागनु नीका हरि कीरतन महि जागना।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (मारू म० 5, पृ० 1018)

It is the practice of Saints to keep awake at night, while engaging in prayer to the Lord.

Men of the world spend this time in sensual and worldly pleasures. Men of God spend their nights in remembering Him. Both are awake, but the blessed are those who utilize it in Hari-Kirtan, that is, in the remembrance of the Lord.

Shams-i-Tabriz says,

रोज़ पए कस्ब–ओ–शब अज़ बहरे–इश्क़, जुमलाए–शब क़िस्सा कुनां बाखुदा।
ख़लक बखुफ़्तंद वले आशिकां, शब हमा शब दर हरमे–किब्रिया।

-- कुल्लियाते-शम्स तब्रेज़ (पृ० 97)

Night is the time when the Beloved Lord appears. Those who are asleep at this time are depriving themselves of a great boon. The day is for work, but the night is for love and devotion to the Lord. Therefore, the whole night should be spent in communion with the Lord. The whole world sleeps, but the devotees spend the night in meditation at the Feet of the Lord.

All times are good for meditation, and one should utilize whatever time suits him. But the morning time just before daybreak, and evening time immediately after sunset – are particularly beneficial, because these times unite night and day (dusk and dawn), and spiritual currents are particularly strong and powerful at such a time. During the day, we are engaged in the affairs of the world. Therefore, only night remains for devotion to the Lord.

A man who works during the day, naturally feels tired in the evening. For him, sleep is essential and it comes automatically to remove the fatigue of the day. Thus, only the latter part of the night remains, during which a person can do meditation in complete alertness. The Time of Elixir begins from three in the morning. The body and mind are refreshed and calm, and fit for meditation. Therefore, the latter part of the night is considered more beneficial for this purpose.

The fruit of meditation done in the first part of the night is just like the budding of the trees, but meditation during the latter part of the night is like the tree bearing the ripe fruit. At this time, one gets the Grace of God.

पहिलै पहरै फुलड़ा फलु भी पछा राति।।
जो जागंन्हि लहंनि से साई कंनो दाति।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सलोक सेख फ़रीद, पृ० 1384)

When the night is young, it yieldeth flower. When old, the fruit. Yea, they who keep awake and aware in God, alone receive the gifts from the Lord. (Farid)

During sleep, the soul-consciousness comes down to the throat or the navel centre, and when a person is awake, the consciousness is at the eye centre. Therefore, if one makes an effort to withdraw his consciousness from the body, which is a practice for separating spirit from matter, the soul will easily leave the body in the early morning, because at that time the soul has just entered the pores of the body and can be easily withdrawn from them. Besides, in the early morning hour, there are usually no worries of the world to

occupy our minds, and such a time is therefore better for concentration, which is not possible at other times because of worldly duties, etc. At the Time of Elixir, the mind is quite fresh and the day's turmoil have not spread their tentacles over it. With the rising of the sun and the falling of its rays, our thoughts begin to scatter. In the early morning hours, a person is very near God. Concentration attained and meditation done at this time leave their impression on the day's work. And whatever such a person does, he does with a concentrated mind.

No spiritual practice should be undertaken immediately after a heavy meal or on a full stomach, because then the body energies are engaged in the digestive process. It is better to meditate on an empty stomach. In the early morning hours the stomach is empty, as the food taken the evening before is normally digested completely by that time.

Guru Ram Das says,

हरि धनु अंमृत वेलै वतै का बीजिआ भगत खाइ खरचि रहे निखुटै नाही।।
हलति पलति हिर धनै की भगता कउ मिली वडिआई।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सूही म० 4, पृ० 734)

During the Time of Elixir, one should attach oneself to devotion of the Lord, because at this time such efforts blossom and bear fruit without fail, which never diminish and lead to honour both here and beyond. Sowing the Lord's Name when the morning is young, the devotee reaps an inexhaustible harvest. Both now and hereafter, the devotees are blest with the glory of the Lord's riches.

The world sleeps, while men of God are awake in His remembrance and are dyed in the hues of His love. Lord Krishna says,

या निशा सर्वभमूतानां तस्यां जागर्ति संयमी।
यस्यां जाग्रति भूतानि सा निशा पश्यतो मुनेः।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (2:69)

While ordinary people waste the Time of Elixir in deep sleep, regarding it as night, the devotees of the Lord keep awake. But during the day, when ordinary people are awake, the devotees of the Lord consider it to be night. (Gita)

John S. Hayland in his book The Life of Christ has given the under noted description:

There is an hour of the Indian night, a little before the first glimmer of the dawn, when the stars are unbelievably clear and closer, shining with radiance beyond our belief in this foggy land. The trees stand silent around one with a friendly presence. As yet there is no sound from awakening birds, but the whole world seems to be intent, alive, listening, eager. At such a moment the veil between the things that are seen and the things that are unseen becomes so thin as to interpose scarcely any barrier at all between the eternal beauty and truth and the soul which would comprehend them.

Farid says,

फरीदा पिछल राति न जागिओहि जीवदड़ो मुइओहि।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सलोक सेख फ़रीद, पृ० 1383)

A person who does not get up and remain awake at dawn is not alive; he is virtually dead. And the head which does not bow in devotion to the Lord at such a time has no worth! (Farid)

Maulana Rum says,

ख़्वाब रा बिगुज़ार इम्शब ऐ पिसर, यक शबे दर कूए–बे–ख़्वाबां गुज़र।
बनिगर आंहा रा किह् मजनूं गश्ता अंद हमचू परवाना बवसलश कुश्ता अंद।

-- मसनवी मौलाना रूमी (दफ़्तर 6, पृ० 74)

O seeker! Cease your sleep at night and walk into the street of those who keep a vigil. You will behold them happy and blissful in the Lord's refulgence within, like lovers deep in contemplation of their beloveds, and in the same manner as a moth is enraptured by the light of a lamp.

Another Saint, Khwaja Kutubuddin, says,

नीम शब अज ख़्वाबे–ख़ुद बेदार शौ तू ऐ पिसर,
मुंतज़िर मीबाश ता दिलबर कुनद सूइयत नज़र।

-- ख़्वाजा कुतुबुद्दीन

O my son, forsaking your sleep at midnight, lie awaiting your Beloved's glance.

He further says,

दिला वक़्ते–सहर मी बाश बेदार, सर अज़ बालीने–ख़्वाब–नाज़ बरदार।
ब–कुंजे–ख़लवते–तारीक बनशीं, गरत बायद तजल्ला अज़ रुख़े–यार।

O my heart, if you wish to bathe in the light of your Beloved's face, awake at early dawn, leave the comforts of your bed, sit in meditation in a corner, and you will behold Him.

Shams-i-Tabriz similarly states:

गर तू नख़ुस्पी शबे ऐ मह लिक़ा, रू बतू बनुमायद गंजे–बक़ा।
गरम शवी शब तू बख़ुर्शीद–ग़ैब, चश्म तुरा बाज़ कुनद आं ज़िया।

-- कुल्लियाते-शम्स तब्रेज़ (पृ० 97)

O thou beautiful moon-like seeker, if you do not sleep at night you will gain the treasure of immortality. Your night will become resplendent with that hidden Sun. Your eyes will open and you will behold His splendour.

He then adds:

हज़ार शब ज़ि बराए हवाए ख़ुद ख़ुस्पी,
यके शबे चिह् शवद अज़ बराए यार मख़ुस्प।
शनीदाए किह् शहां कामहा बशब याबंद,
बराए इश्क़े–शहंशाहे–कामगार मख़ुस्प।
चू मग़्ज़ कुहना शुदी ताज़ा मग़्ज़ीयत बख़्शद,
किह् जुमला मग़्ज़ शवी ऐ उम्मीदवार मख़ुस्प।

-- दीवाने-शम्स तब्रेज़ (पृ० 46-47)

You have spent thousands of nights in endeavouring to fulfil your desires and cravings, but if you do not sleep for the sake of your Beloved, then what harm can befall you? Do you not know that whatever the spiritual kings possess, was obtained by them at night?

You should remain awake for the sake of that Giver of all gifts, and you should have no fear that sleeplessness will result in mental fatigue, because during that time flows the Foundation of Life, the Nectar of which will make you refreshed and heighten your consciousness. Therefore, do not sleep. Every morning, the Voice of the Lord calls you. By listening to it, all your worries and troubles will vanish, and the stains of previous evil impressions on your mind will also be washed away. Do not sleep throughout the night, because at that time thousands of lives receive the sustaining life-force. Like the full moon, the Supreme Lord descends from the highest heavens to bless His disciples with the gifts of Grace and Mercy.

Farid also says,

फरीदा राति कथूरी वंडीऐ सुतिआ मिलै न भाउ।।
जिन्हा नैण नींद्रावले तिन्हा मिलणु कुआउ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सलोक सेख फ़रीद, पृ० 1382)

God distributes musk at night. Those who remain asleep do not receive their share. And indeed what right have they to get it, when they have a greater love for their sleep?

Again, Maulana Rumi says,

शब रूह–हा वासिल शवद मक़्सूद–हा हासिल शवद,
चूं रोज़े–रोशन दिल शवद हर कू ज़ि शब आगाह शुद।

-- दीवाने-शम्स तब्रेज़ (पृ० 81)

Only at night does the soul meets its Lord and has all its desires fulfilled. The hearts of those who realize the value of the night, become as brilliant as the noonday sun.

Laying emphasis on keeping a vigil at night, Shams-i-Tabriz further says,

मक़ामे–ख़लवत ओ यार ओ समाअ ओ तू खुफ़्ता,
किह् शर्म बादत अज़ आं ज़ुल्फ़हाए–आशुफ़्ता।
बदां किह् ख़लवते–शब बर मिसाले–दरयाईस्त,
बक़अरे बहर गुहर हाए ख़ूब नासुफ़्ता।

-- दीवाने-शम्स तब्रेज़ (पृ० 338)

There is seclusion at night. Our Beloved is within us, and what a gracious time it is! The Sound Currents of Naam are reverberating on all sides and are easily audible in the silence of the night. If you have an intense longing to meet your Lord, you should know the darkness of the night is like the long black tresses of the Beloved, spread everywhere. And if you continue to sleep at night, then you should be ashamed of yourself.

The solitude of night is like a river which has innumerable pure gems in it. If you are keen to acquire them, you dive deep into the ocean of the night. Do not be asleep. Behold the stars at night! How they keep awake and travel unimaginable distances! And learn the lesson that by keeping awake at night you also have to reach a Goal.

Hafiz also has similarly stressed that,

दुआए–सुबहो–शामे–तू कलीदे–गंजे–मक़्सूद अस्त,
ब–ईं राहो–सविश मीरौ किह् बा दिलदार पैवंदी।

-- दीवाने-हाफ़िज़ (पृ० 407)

The key to the Treasure of God lies in meditation during the early morning hours and pining for the Lord the whole night. In other words, you should tread this path so that you may meet your Beloved.

Guru Arjan says,

झालाघे उठि नामु जपि निसि बासुर आराधि।।
कार्हा तुझै न बिआपई नानक मिटै उपाधि।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी म० 5, पृ० 255)

The lovers of God keep awake in meditation at night, particularly in the early morning hours. They repeat His Name, and are rid of all their sufferings and cares, anxieties and dissensions. m

5

POSTURE (*Asana* आसन)

Posture signifies sitting in a particular position and maintaining it firmly and for a certain length of time. Hatha Yoga हठ–योग describes numerous postures, and of these, eighty-four are well known. The practice of these postures confers many advantages because they are an aid to concentration.

They help to eliminate all bodily ailments and weaknesses. The organs, veins and arteries remain healthy and vigorous. There is no loss of heat in the solar plexus. The food is well digested and the respiration is regular. By this practice the body is brought under control. Further, a number of mental advantages also accrue, such as concentration, clarity of thought, deep insight, etc.

Every human being has body, mind and soul. By the intake of food, the body does its work; through the body, the mind is activated, and through the mind, the soul functions. The main purpose of human life is to know the self and to attain God-realization. For the control of body and mind, the practice of Hatha Yoga हठ–योग and Raja Yoga राज–योग have long been in vogue among the Hindus. Hatha Yoga deals with the principles for breath control and of different postures. In Raja Yoga, on the other hand, the mind is stilled, and its power is increased through contemplation and firm resolution to create a proper attitude of mind. Both of these methods aim at collecting the soul force at the eye centre or the Third Eye.

Ashtang Yoga has eight aspects:

- *Yama* यम -Restraint

- *Ahimsa* अहिंसा - Non-violence or abstinence from injury in thought, word or deed.

- ***Satya*** सत्य or Sat -Truthfulness.
- ***Asteya*** अस्तेय - Not stealing, or abstaining from theft.
- ***Brahmacharya*** ब्रह्मचर्य - Continence or Celibacy.
- ***Aparigraha*** अपरिगृह - Freedom from greed and covetousness, or negation of desire for possessions beyond the necessities of life.
- ***Niyama*** नियम - Observances
- ***Shaucha*** शौच - Cleanliness or internal and external purity.
- ***Santosha*** संतोष - Contentment.
- ***Tapa*** तप - Self-discipline of the body, tongue and mind.
- ***Swadhyaya*** स्वाध्याय - Study of self; also of Scriptures.
- ***Ishwar Pranidhana*** ईश्वर प्रणिधान - Self-surrender to the Will of God.
- ***Asana*** आसन - Posture
- ***Pranayama*** प्राणायाम - Practice of inhaling, holding the breath, then exhaling, ultimately holding the breath at one of the centres in the body for a long time.
- ***Pratyahara*** प्रत्याहार - Control of sense organs.
- ***Dharana*** धारण - Resolution or firmness for creating a proper attitude of mind for contemplation.
- ***Dhyana*** ध्यान – Contemplation
- ***Samadhi*** समाधि – Super-consciousness or mystic trance.

The third aspect of yoga, viz., Asana, is relevant to the subject under consideration, namely, assuming a correct posture for meditation. If one does not remain steadfast in a particular posture, but frequently changes position, the mind currents do not become concentrated. It is therefore essential that the desired posture should be maintained. Otherwise, the yogic exercises cannot be performed successfully.

In yogic practice, the blood vessels have to be first cleansed and purified. This is done by means of four types of postures: standing, sitting, lying flat on the floor, and standing on the head (with head on the floor and legs vertical). These four postures have their respective advantages, but,

for our present purpose, it is not necessary to give a more detailed description of them.

Yogis have performed all the eighty-four postures without gaining the ultimate goal. They do not rid the mind of erratic or vicious thoughts. They are primarily for the benefit of the physical body, and do not lead to God-realization. Obviously, if a medicine does not cure the ailment, it is useless. These postures require sustained effort, without much profit. Sant-Mat संत–मत, therefore, deprecates such practices.

We have first to see, which is the easiest posture by means of which our soul currents can be brought to the eye centre and concentration attained, and, which a child, a young or an old person can adopt with equal ease. It is essential to be alert before starting the spiritual practice. The practitioner should take a bath to get over sloth and drowsiness. If for some reason, this is not possible, one should at least wash the hands, feet and face. One should then sit cross-legged, keeping the back straight but neither stiff nor loose. It is essential that the spinal column remains erect. When doing the practice, one should sit on the floor or on a wooden cot. The practitioner should not support his back against a wall or a chair. He should be careful not to fall asleep. If one has to sit for a long period, one can use a Bairagan बैरागन (wooden arm rest) with advantage. [In meditation instructions for Western disciples, Sant Kirpal Singh would later emphasize the need to sit in a comfortable position, not necessarily without the support of a chair:

> *Sit in a position most comfortable to you, one in which you can sit the longest without moving…].*

Whatever posture one may adopt for his spiritual practice, he must satisfy himself that it causes no restlessness and that he can easily forget the body. The Saints have adopted a posture that is both easy and natural. They do not regard the different postures of Hatha Yoga to be essential for spiritual uplift. The posture adopted by the Saints is that, by which the soul currents can be withdrawn from the nine apertures

of the body to the soul's headquarters between the two eyebrows. And the consciousness has to be separated from the body. The mind is thus rid of all its ramblings.

The centre between the two eyebrows is the spiritual heart centre of the Saints. To free the consciousness from the body, it is necessary to still the mind and concentrate the mind's currents at this point. All cares of the mind are obliterated by this means.

One can obtain outstanding results by this posture, for the soul currents, which are scattered into the world through the nine apertures of the body, namely, two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, mouth and two lower outlets, can collect at the eye centre and descend upwards. The soul then contacts Naam or Truth at the Tenth Gate (Daswan Dwar दसवाँ द्वार), and finally it reaches Sach Khand, where ego, attachment, greed, desire, and lust leave it, and the cycle of births and deaths is ended.

The Lord, who is formless, has His everlasting abode in the spiritual regions of Sach Khand. He is permanent and sustains the entire universe and the upper realms. His true abode is eternal and imperishable. He remains in the Sahaj सहज state, which is attained by merging oneself into the Shabd or Sound Current (the Word or the Audible Life Stream).

His abode is free from fear. Reaching there, one transcends birth and death and the cycle of transmigration. It is beyond the three gunas गुण or attributes, and lies in the fourth stage, where there is neither sorrow nor fear. By attaining this state of 'Sahaj' सहज, the soul enters into communion with the Lord. The devotee and the Lord become one and never separate again. The cycle of birth and rebirth ceases. All doubts and suspicions come to an end.

मनु दृड़ु करि आसणि बैसु जोगी ता तेरी कलपणा जाई।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (रामकली म० 3, पृ० 908)

Make your stable mind the Yogic posture you sit in, O Yogi, and then you shall be rid of your tormenting desires.

The physical postures of the body end with death. The postures in the subtle regions also vanish with the dissolution of these regions, but the highest posture of Sahaj is not subject to dissolution. It is endless and immortal, and by attaining it, one does not fall again. This posture is regarded in scriptures as lasting and true. It can be realized by listening to the Shabd शब्द, which is also called Panch Shabd पंच–शब्द (Five Sounds), Guru Shabd गुरु–शब्द or Naam नाम. Its attainment is possible only through the Grace and the Guidance of the Master.

आसणि बैसणि थिरु नाराइणु तितु मनु राता वीचारे।।
नानक नामि रते बैरागी अनहद रुण झुणकारे।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (आसा म० 1, पृ० 436)

The Lord's posture and His seat are permanent; my mind is absorbed in reflective contemplation upon Him. O Nanak, the detached ones are imbued with His Name, the Unstruck Melody, and the celestial vibrations. m



REMEMBRANCE OR REPETITION
(*Sumiran* or *Simran* सुमिरन, सिमरन)

The whole world is engaged in thinking of its own work, or in remembering or thinking about something: the shopkeeper about his shop, the farmer about his land or crops, a person in service about his work, a mother about her child, a friend about his companion, and an enemy about his foe.

It is a well-known fact that when we think of something, its mental picture appears before our eyes. This is only natural. Everybody contemplates the forms, which he thinks about.

No one is free from repetition or remembrance of some kind. It is through this process, that the worldly objects enter into every pore of our body, mind and intellect, and man is virtually dyed in the hue of the world. It is because of this, that the soul has to be born again and again. As we think so we become. If we give up remembrance of the world and instead think of the Lord, we can easily gain the means of Salvation.

What is Simran?

In order to understand it properly, one has to pay attention to its true significance. Simran is a Sanskrit word derived from the root 'Smra स्मृ'. It has several meanings: to protect, to make a mental picture of one's deity in the heart, and to contemplate on this form, to remember a certain person or thing to such an extent, as to think about it with every breath, to make it a part and parcel of one's life, and ultimately to awaken into and to live in it. Muslims call it Zikr, that is, to remember someone.

Simran confers all the benefits of the eight aspects of Yoga. Simran is an essential part of Yoga. There is a reference to it in the Bhagavad Gita:

मैय्यावेश्य मनो ये मां नित्ययुक्ता उपासते।
श्रद्धया परयोपेतास्ते मे युक्ततमा मताः।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (12:2)

Those who, fixing their mind in me, are constantly engaged in my worship, endowed with supreme faith – those are the best yogis, in my opinion.

Simran bestows happiness, peace and bliss, and leads us to a state of super-consciousness.

The repetition of any name or names of God is called Simran. Through it an extraordinary current of consciousness enters the body. It is stated in scriptures that whoever considers the Holy Names as mere words or regards Guru as a mere man and not as God incarnate, goes straight to hell.

Repetition should be done with one-pointed attention, and in due course a stage is reached, when Repetition ceases and the form contemplated upon manifests itself. This is the culmination point of Repetition. Repetition and Contemplation can be done both separately or simultaneously.

Guru Arjan has eulogized the state of Simran thus:

अंतरि गुरु आराधणा जिहवा जपि गुर नाउ।।
नेत्री सतिगुरु पेखणा स्रवणी सुनणा गुर नाउ।।
सतिगुर सेती रतिआ दरगह पाईऐ ठाउ।।
कहु नानक किरपा करे जिस नो एह वथु देइ।।
जग महि उतम काढीअहि विरले केई केइ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गूजरी की वार म० 5, पृ० 517)

Within our hearts, we contemplate the Master; on our tongue is His Holy Name, in our eyes resides His Form, in our ears resounds the Divine Melody. We remain completely engrossed in His remembrance. We become merged in the state of ceaselessly dwelling upon Him. Our mind and intellect – their very fabric – are completely coloured with the dye of His constant remembrance. Says Nanak, this treasure is bestowed on those who are blessed with His Mercy. In the midst of the world, they are known as the most pious – they are rare indeed.

सासि सासि न घड़ी विसरै पलु मूरतु दिनु राते।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी म० 5, पृ० 247)

With each and every breath, I think of You, day and night; I do not forget You, for an instant, even for a moment.

Method of Withdrawing Within Oneself

From times immemorial, man has been extroverted, observing outside objects through the sense organs. Three sense organs are chiefly responsible for drawing our attention, namely, the tongue, the eyes, and the ears.

With our tongue, we talk to the people of the world. With it we repeat our thoughts and ideas about the world, and communicate with the world. In this manner the impressions of the world enter our mind and intellect. With our eyes we see the objects of the world, and their forms get imprinted on our mind. With our ears we listen to the voices of the world. And by listening to them constantly we become one with them. Our eyes are responsible for 83 per cent of the impressions imprinted on our mind, our ears for 14 per cent, and the remaining 3 per cent are formed by the other sense organs of the body put together. If our attention ceases to go out and we thus stop the entry of impressions from outside, we can, with an inward gaze, realize the Truth. It is for this reason that Saints always impress upon us to shut our eyes and our ears while doing Repetition or listening to the Shabd शब्द.

The power of speech of the tongue should be utilized in Simran; the power of the sight of the eyes should be used in contemplating the form of the Master; and the power of hearing of the ears should be spent in listening to the Sound Current. These three practices are absolutely essential. We are now dealing with the first, namely, Simran सिमरन. The other two, viz., Dhyan ध्यान (Contemplation) and Bhajan भजन or Sound Current will be taken up in subsequent chapters.

Whenever we wish to withdraw our consciousness inwards, the thoughts of the world invade us. These are the

impressions that have continually entered through the sense organs. Thus, the affairs of household, office, shops and other places, also the forms of relatives, friends and foes that we have been seeing, project themselves on the mind's screen and obstruct concentration. The first step for spiritual uplift, therefore, is to eliminate them.

The removal of the impressions that are formed in our subconscious mind, and which come before us involuntarily is the second step. It is only after the devotee has ascended the two steps, that he can become introverted or turned inward.

It is also necessary that repetition should be replaced by Repetition itself, just as a water-stricken crop is revived with water. The Simran of the objects of the world should be replaced by the Simran of God, and thoughts of the world by Contemplation of the Master, who is God incarnate. Thus is imprinted on our subconscious mind, the impression of God in the form of our Satguru. Where the waves of the world once dominated the scene, there will now be remembrance of the Lord and Contemplation of the Master. The devotee begins to forget the world and its shadow shapes. The mind loses much of its fickleness and a certain amount of concentration is achieved.

Any left-over rambling tendencies are ended by listening to the Sound Current, which resounds in all human beings. Then only comes complete concentration. This Sound Current is the heritage of all. We do not hear it, because our attention is extroverted. This Divine Melody resounds at the headquarters of the soul in the body and can be heard at the eye focus by going within.

The Sound Current has the force of a magnet, which attracts the soul and makes it still. Then the soul passes through the Sound Current to the place, from which it emanates. This place is the origin of the whole world. When a person listens attentively to the Heavenly Sound, he begins to be enraptured by its bliss, and automatically turns his back upon the world.

The display of name and fame, and learning and intellect in the world is responsible for the scattering of our soul currents, and is an impediment in the way of our achieving concentration. Because of such a display, we find it difficult to collect our attention within. It is easy to become educated and intellectually advanced, but it is difficult to subdue the mind, collect the soul current, and ascend to higher regions.

We cannot see our Lord with the eyes or our intellect. It is only the eye of the soul (nirat निरत) which can perceive God. So long as our mind's currents are spread out, it is impossible to behold Him. If therefore we can control the mind and the sense, we can behold within, the refulgence of the Lord.

When, through Simran, we complete the course of concentration, we reach the second stage, namely, Contemplation. And through Contemplation, we are able to listen to the Sound Current.

For self-realization, Saints advocate these three steps – Simran सिमरन (Repetition), Dhyan ध्यान (Contemplation), and Bhajan भजन (listening to the Shabd or Sound Current). Rhythmical control of the breath, known as Pranayam प्राणयाम, which is performed by some persons for attaining concentration, is an artificial method. The methods taught by the Saints, as described above, are natural and easy. They can be performed by a child, a young or an old person. In practicing these methods, no difficulties are encountered. Moreover, they do not adversely affect our health. The Ashtanga Yoga अष्टांग योग practices are difficult, and householders cannot perform them.

The Saints' methods are complete in themselves. By following them, we realize the Truth without fail.

Bu Ali Shah Qalandar says,

चश्म बंदो–गोश–बंदो–लब बबंद, गर न बीनी सिर्रे–हक़्क़ बर मन बख़ंद।

-- मसनवी बू-अली शाह क़लन्दर (पृ० 30)

Close your eyes, your ears and your mouth, and if then you do not perceive the beauty of God, you may laugh at me.

Method of Simran

People perform Simran (Repetition) in a variety of ways, and these are:

- Some do it with the help of beads. This divides the attention, because a part of it is engaged in counting the beads, and the other in reversing the process on reaching the head bead. By this means, complete concentration does not come. So long as the attention accompanies the process, some benefit accrues. Otherwise, while the fingers rotate the beads, the mind roams about.

Kabir says,

कबीर माला मनहिं की, और संसारी भेख।
माला फेरे हरि मिलैं, तो गले रहट के देख।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह-2 (सुमिरन का अंग 18, पृ० 99)

The true rosary is the rosary of the mind. The rosaries of the world are false. If it were possible to have communion with the Lord by rotating outside beads, then the Persian wheel, round whose neck rotate water-holders, should have been the one to realize God.

The Chinese have designed a machine in which one rotation of the crankshaft makes a container revolve a thousand times. A piece of paper on which a prayer is written is put into this container. People then go to the temple and turn the wheel twice and are pleased with the feeling that they have repeated the prayer two thousand times. But how can one find peace by such means?

- Some people repeat their prayers with the tongue. This has a certain value, as long as the attention is concentrated on the repetition. But like the rotating of the beads, when the repetition with the tongue becomes automatic, the mind involuntarily wanders. Kabir says,

माला तो कर में फिरै, जीभ फिरै मुख माहिं।
मनुवां तो दहु दिसि फिरै, यह तो सुमिरन नाहिं।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह-2 (सुमिरन का अंग 25, पृ० 100)

The practice where the rosary rotates in the hand, the tongue moves in the mouth, and the mind runs in all the ten directions, is not called Simran (Repetition).

By rotating the rosary, the mind feels elated, but no real benefit results. If the hands are busy in rotating the rosary, how can the soul current collect within? If the soul currents concentrate, the hands cannot rotate the beads. If the soul currents have not withdrawn to the soul's headquarters, nothing can be gained. Therefore, we make a rosary of the mind. There is no need for one of wood.

Many people use their fingertips, instead of a rosary for doing their repetition. Kabir says,

मला मो से लड़ि पड़ी, का फेरत हौ मोय।
मन कै माला फेरि ले, गुरु से मेला होय।
क्रिया करै अँगुरी गनै, मन धावै चहुँ ओर।
जेहि फेरे साईं मिलै, सो भया काठ कठोर।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह-2 (सुमिरन का अंग 20-21, पृ० 99)

If you say the rosary of the mind, you can have communion with the Master. When the soul has not become motionless, of what use is counting on the fingers? You are counting on your fingers with the hand, but your mind is strutting about. This is all futile.

माला फेरत मन खुसी, ता तें कछू न होय।
मन माला के फेरते, घट उँजियारी होय।
माला फेरत जुग भया, फिरा न मन का फेर।
कर का मनका डारि दे, मन का मनका फेर।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह-2 (सुमिरन का अंग 15-16, पृ० 99)

If the rosary of the mind is repeated, then the inner consciousness is awakened and Light appears within. For ages people have rotated beads, but their minds have not changed. Therefore, giving up the counting of beads with the hand, rotate only the bead of the mind.

By so doing our hands and feet will become numb, so much so that the entire consciousness of the body will collect at the eye centre, and the soul will enter the inner realms and will behold radiance within.

- Some people do repetition with their throat. This is beneficial, so long as the attention is properly directed; otherwise the mind wanders aimlessly, as it does in the first two methods.

- Some carry out repetition in their heart. This suffers from the same shortcomings as do the other methods mentioned above.

- There is yet another method of Simran in which the Yogis produce a sound by raising their breath at the navel centre. This practice leads to a temporary control of the mind. Therefore, this method is also not without its defects.

Repetition by the tongue is better than that with a rosary, and that in the throat is superior to one by the tongue. Similarly, that in the heart is more beneficial than the one in the throat. The fifth, that in the navel centre is attempted by the yogis alone. Simran, by means of a rosary or by the tongue, is considered to be the lowest form of repetition, that in the throat and with the heart being distinctly superior. However, all types of repetition, when accompanied by one-pointed attention, yield good results. They cleanse the mind and bring some measure of peace. But the soul currents do not collect at the eye centre, so there is little gain in spiritual development.

It is for this reason, that the Saints start from the very root of the thing. They advocate repetition by the tongue of the soul. This way, we gain the means of making the mind still. Saints call this the Simran of the soul.

By following this method, the mind does not roam about. Here, it is not a case that repetition continues and the mind strays out, as happens in the methods described earlier. The Simran of the soul awakens the inner consciousness and enables one to hear Shabd or the Sound Current (the Word), which brings real peace and bliss.

Khwaja Farid-uddin Attar has divided the various methods of Simran into three parts. He says,

ज़िक्र बर सिह वजद आमद बे खिलाफ़,
तू नदा नी ई सुख़ुन रा अज़ गुज़ाफ़।
आम रा नबुवद बजुज़ ज़िक्रे–ज़बाँ,
ज़िक्रे–ख़ासाँ बाशद अज़ दिल बेगुमाँ।

ज़िक्रे ख़ास–उल–ख़ास ज़िक्रे सिर्र बुवद,
हर कि ज़ाकिर नीसत ऊ ख़ासिर बुवद।
ख़्वान्दने–कुराँ ज़िक्रे लिसाँ,
हर किरा ई नीस्त हस्त अज़ मुफ़लिसाँ।

-- अत्तार

We do not understand the significance of Simran due to our ignorance. We are aware only of Simran by the tongue. There are only a few people who do Simran with the attention at their heart. A selected few, a very special type of devotees, do it by a secret method. Unless the Simran is done by this last method, the efforts are in vain. The reading of Holy Scriptures is the Simran by tongue—those who do not even do this much are indeed extremely indolent. This secret method of Simran, the place where attention is to be focused while doing it, and the manner of its conduct can be learnt only from a perfect Adept.

The Muslim Fakirs tell of five different methods of Simran or Repetition:

- Lasani लासानी, that is by tongue. It is also known as Qalma-i-Shariat or Nasoot.

- Qalbi क़ल्बी, which is done through the heart, by putting pressure on the heart by means of breathing (Pranayama or Habs-e-Dam). This is also called Qalma-i-Tariakat or Malkoot.

- Roohi रूही, repetition by the soul with attention at the Third Eye. This is known as Qalma-i-Marfat or Jabroot.

- Sirri सिर्री, which is obtained by means of inner revelation. This is also known as Qalma-i-Haqiqat or Lahoot. In this, the practitioner becomes one with the Simran.

- Khafi ख़फ़ी, by which, one merges in the Lord. This is also called Hahoot. The practitioner loses his own identity and imbibes that of the Lord. This is the permanent and everlasting stage (Fana-dar-fana).

Another Saint says that:

ज़िक्रे–ज़बां लक–लक, ज़िक्रे–क़ल्ब और ज़िक्रे–रूही राहते–जां है।

Repetition by the tongue gives temporary results; Simran at the heart is of an ordinary type; the spiritual Repetition is superior and is practiced only by highly advanced souls.

Maulana Rumi says,

ज़िक्र कुन मज़कूर ता गरदद अयां, नै हमीं ज़िक्रे किह् बाशद बर ज़बां।
ज़िक्रे–लफ़्ज़ी ग़ैरे–आरिज़ बेश नीस्त, ज़िक्रे–रूही जुज़ फ़ने–दरवेश नीस्त।

-- मसनवी मौलाना रूमी (दफ़्तर 6, पृ० 517)

Do the Repetition so that you may manifest God, but not the repetition by tongue, the results of which are not lasting.

The Spiritual Repetition at the eye centre is the monopoly of Saints.

In the Shandilya Upanishad we find:

जपोनाम विधिवद्गुरूपदिष्ट वेदाविरुद्धमन्त्राभ्यासः।
तदिद्वविधं वाचिकं मानसं चेति। मानसं तुमनसा ध्यानयुक्तम्।
वाचिकं द्विविधमुच्चैरुपांशुभेदेन। उच्चैरुच्चारणं यथोक्तफलम्।
उपांशु सहस्रगुणम्। मानसं कोटिगुणम्।
व्रत नाम वेदोक्तविधिनिषेधानुष्ठाननैयत्यम्।

-- शाण्डिल्य उपनिषद्, अथर्ववेद (1:2)

According to the Vedas, there are various advantages of repetition by tongue. Repetition done slowly and faintly is a thousand times better than that which is done quickly, and that by mind is ten million times more fruitful than that by tongue.

Repetition by tongue, without understanding the significance of the words, or parrot-like repeating of a name, without much thought, is a mere show. The ordinary people who do this type of Simran remain bereft of any good.

Purpose of Simran

Simran is the first step of the spiritual ladder. Guru Arjan says in Sukhmani:

सिमरउ सिमरि सिमरि सुखु पावउ।। कलि कलेस तन माहि मिटावउ।।
सिमरउ जासु बिसुंभर एकै।। नामु जपत अगनत अनेकै।।
बेद पुरान सिम्रिति सुधाख्यर।। कीने राम नाम इक आख्यर।।
किनका एक जिसु जीअ बसावै।। ता की महिमा गनी न आवै।।
कांखी एकै दरस तुहारो।। नानक उन संगि मोहि उधारो।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी सुखमनी म० 5, पृ० 262)

Meditate, meditate, meditate in remembrance of Him, and find peace. Worry and anguish shall be dispelled from your body. Remember in praise the One who pervades the whole Universe.

His Name is chanted by countless people, in so many ways. The Vedas, the Puranas and the Smritees, the purest of utterances, were created from the One Word of the Name of the Lord. That one, in whose soul the One Lord dwells, the praises of his glory cannot be recounted. Those who yearn only for the blessing of Your Darshan, says Nanak: save me along with them!

By Simran alone you get to the real Shabd or Sound Current which leads you to God.

Place of Simran

How can we reach the place, where we can contact the Sound Current? Because this Sound Current is not the subject of intellect, eyes, or ears, what method then can we adopt, by which we may become so fine as to catch and enjoy the Sound?

To do this, we have to concentrate our attention at the Third Eye by means of Simran. This point has been referred to as "Divya Chakshu दिव्य चक्षु" by the Hindus and "Nuq-ta-i-Suwaida नुक़्ता–ए–सुवैदा" by the Muslims. This is the gate of the Astral and Causal regions. In the waking state it is the headquarters of the soul, and it lies above the six physical centres of the body. Next, we have to go beyond Anda अंड and Brahmanda ब्रह्मांड.

The yogis first awaken the six centres of the body and then ascend higher. However, if we concentrate at the head-quarters of the soul (during waking hours), our progress can be both easy and quick. It is for this reason, that in the Hindu Scriptures, as well as in the Adi Granth, great emphasis has been placed on Simran being carried out at the Third Eye, the headquarters of the soul in the body.

In order to concentrate at this centre, we have to carry out one-pointedly the Simran of some name or names of the Lord. Other methods are unnecessary. Guru Arjan says,

ब्रिथा अनुग्रहं गोबिंदह जस्य सिमरण रिदंतरह।।
आरोग्यं महा रोग्यं बिसिम्रते करुणा मयह।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सलोक सहसकृति म० 5, पृ० 1356)

Those who meditate in remembrance on the Lord in their hearts, look upon even pain as God's Grace. The healthy person is very sick, if he does not remember the Lord, the Embodiment of Mercy.

What are the names, which one should repeat, and what is their connection with God? For Simran, there are two kinds of names: 1. Personal or subjective names and 2. Attributive or qualitative names

Generally, people repeat the names describing the Lord by one attribute or another. Such repetition is beneficial only up to a limit, for it fails to open the inner vision and enable one to witness inner phenomena. Saints, therefore, reveal to us the names of the presiding deities of the regions within. Therefore, the names that a Master imparts are the only ones to be repeated; for they alone can lead the way. These names are also energy-charged and help the transference of spiritual energy to the disciple, with the result that rapid progress follows.

The negative Power has placed a number of impediments in these regions, with which the soul traversing the Astral and the Causal planes has to contend. These can be overcome by repeating the Holy Names given to us by a True Master (Satguru सत्गुरु). They also save the devotee from other difficulties and pitfalls. Simran of such Holy Names is beneficial both here and beyond. It is for this reason that Scriptures lay emphasis on repeating only such names.

The names that are revealed to us by a True Master carry His power, and this comes to the aid of the disciple, enabling him to transcend both death and the Negative Power. The words of the Master are eternal, and through them, we are freed from the cycle of births and deaths.

Therefore, whatever Names are bestowed upon us by a Master, they are conducive to our greatest good. Each Name carries its own influence.

If you think of a mango or some other fruit known to you, you remember the taste and its flavor in your mouth.

You also see it with your mind's eye. Similarly, other objects appear before our mind's eye when we name them. When we talk of a friend, we get a mental picture of him, for the name and the person named are inseparable. To live by His name is to live near Him.

Vyasa Rishi, while translating one of the verses of Patanjali Rishi, says,

तस्य वाचकः प्रणवः।।

-- पातंजल योगसूत्र (समाधि पाद 27)

The word to designate Ishwara is Pranava or Om.

Muin du din Chishti says,

म्याने–इस्म–ओ–मुसम्मा चू फ़र्क़ नीस्त ब–बीं,
तू दर तजल्ली–ए–अस्मा जमाले–नामे–ख़ुदा।

-- दीवाने-ग़रीब नवाज़ (पृ० 17)

The name and the person named are one. Between them there is no difference. In the greatness of names, discern the glory of God.

It is true that by repeating the Name of God, whether it is personal or qualitative, one's mind is deeply influenced, because Repetition and Contemplation go hand in hand.

By Simran of Holy Names, we get rid of the thoughts of the world. One feels the presence of God. Ultimately, Simran leads us to the Unstruck Music अनहत शब्द, which is the means of taking the soul to upper realms. By repeating the Varnatmak वर्णनात्मक names, we gain access to the Dhunatmak धुन्यात्मक Name. Muin-ud-din Chishti clarifies:

यक़ीं बदां किह् तू बाहक़ निशस्ताए शबो–रोज़,
चू हमनशीने–तू बाशद ख़याले–नामे–ख़ुदा।
तुरा सज़द तैरां दर फ़ज़ाए–आलमे–क़ुदस,
बशर्ते–आ किह् ब पर्रे–बबाले–नामे–ख़ुदा।
चू नामे–ऊ शिवनम गर बुवद मरा सद जां,
फ़िदाए ऊस्त बइज़्ज़ो–जलाले–नामे–ख़ुदा।

-- दीवाने-ग़रीब नवाज़ (पृ० 17)

If you have the Name of God fully ingrained within you, rest assured that God Himself is your companion. It behooves you, therefore, to fly to the pure upper regions. The only requirement is that you fly on the wings of God's Names. When I listen to His

Name, the Word or the Divine Melody, I am ready to sacrifice a hundred lives.

How should one Do Simran?

We should repeat the Names with the attention of the mind by maintaining a convenient posture and by concentrating our attention at the eye centre, slightly towards the right. In other words, we should fix our attention at the centre of the eyebrows, but slightly towards the right. One should fix the attention of the mind on the eye centre, and start Simran, as well as Contemplation.

While doing this, care should be taken not to put any pressure on the forehead or the eyes. Start with a short period, but gradually increase the duration to two or three hours.

Gita has prescribed the following procedure:

स्पर्शान्कृत्वा बहिर्बाह्यांश्चक्षुश्चैवान्तरे भ्रवोः।
प्राणापानौ समौ कृत्वा नासाभ्यन्तरचारिणौ।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (7:27)

An ascetic is ever free – who withdraws his attention from outward senses – contacts and fixes it between the two eyebrows. This practice is also done by fixing the attention at the tip of the nose.

By practicing this, all the difficulties of the world are removed, the wavering mind is stilled and one achieves concentration of very high order. Some people close their eyes while doing Repetition, and others do so with open eyes. In the first case, there is a possibility of falling asleep; and in the second, there is the danger of the mind running after the objects of the world. The former is a much better method, but one should start the practice after getting over drowsiness. It is also essential that the practice be done regularly as well as punctually, at the appointed time.

Hafiz says,

हाफ़िज़ वज़ीफ़ाए–तू दुआ गुफ़्तन अस्तो–बस,
दर बंदे आं मबाश किह् नशनीद या शनीद।

-- दीवाने-हाफ़िज़ (पृ० 129)

Your daily duty is to pray before the Lord. This is your real work. Never ponder whether or not your prayer has been heard in the Court of the Lord – that is His prerogative.

By carrying out Simran daily and punctually, the practitioner gains undoubted success.

A person takes two meals a day. Besides, he also takes morning breakfast and afternoon tea. This is all to feed the body, but the food for the soul is Simran and Contemplation of His Form. This food we must tender to the soul. Just as you take food daily to maintain your body, similarly, whether you are at home or travelling, you must provide food for the soul. Never be remiss in this respect.

Repetition of God's Name is an unfailing remedy for all ills. This is a spiritual food for the soul. Christ says,

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. (St. Matthew 4:4, Moses in Deuteronomy 8:3)

Simran and Contemplation bestow showers of the Elixir of Life.

One can practice selfless Simran at any time and in any place. Do not forget it even while answering the call of nature. If one feels drowsy during Simran, he should stand up and do the Repetition for about half an hour. Cold water may also be sprinkled on the face. Eat less at night and use light food consisting of milk and fruit. If celibacy can be maintained along with this diet, the practice leads to quicker and better results.

But for a married person, the marital obligations should be performed with restraint and in accordance with certain set principles. The devotee should live up to the Sant-Mat principles in all his dealings, his food, sleep, speech, etc., and he should try to perform his daily spiritual exercises in the same place and in the same posture, which should not be changed frequently or at short intervals.

Simran should not be done in haste. It should be done slowly and with love and devotion, the Names being repeated clearly and correctly. To do it in haste or to regard it as an

unwanted task, or to go through it merely as a routine, leads nowhere. If the mind becomes lazy while doing Simran, or the attention turns towards sense pleasures, one should repeat the Names audibly for ten or fifteen minutes, so that the mind's attention reverts to the proper place.

The results of Repetition will be in direct proportion to the love and faith brought to bear upon it. Carry out the Simran of the Lord with love and faith. His Names have a great power. When done with faith, one feels intoxicated with joy, with the result that he forgets his body and himself and is aware of the Presence of the Lord. How potent and blissful is the Name of God, for it creates in the devotee a fast-flowing current of bliss, peace and soul force, and he gets truly blessed.

To do Simran, it is not necessary to give up the world and its tasks. Carry on your duties and still keep your attention fixed in Simran.

If you wish to be filled with the Grace of God, then you should banish all else from your mind. Leave everything else aside and cherish the Name of the Lord alone in your heart. As soon as you empty your mind of all thoughts by means of Simran, you will find the way to the Lord's mansion.

Simran should be practiced with full attention. Kabir says,

सुमिरन की सुधि यों करौ, जैसे कामी काम।
एक पलक बिसरै नहीं, निस दिन आठो जाम।।

During Simran, the longing for God in one's mind should be as intense as that of a lover for the beloved, so that sitting, standing, awake or asleep, the form of the Beloved is always in the mind of the lover; he does not forget it even for a second.

सुमिरन की सुधि यों करौ, ज्यों गागर पनिहार।
हालै डोलै सुरति में, कहै कबीर बिचार।।

Simran should have the same attention as that of a woman carrying a pitcher of water on her head. She talks, she walks on the uneven ground, but her attention is focused on the pitcher.

सुमिरन की सुधि यों करौ, ज्यों सुरभी सुत माहिं।
कह कबीर चारा चरत, बिसरत कबहूँ नाहिं।।

Simran should be like a cow, which is grazing, but has her attention fixed on her calf.

सुमिरन की सुध यूँ करौ, जैसे दाम कंगाल।
कहे कबीर बिसरै नही, पल पल लेय संभाल।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह-2 (सुमिरन का अंग 6-8, पृ० 98)

Simran should be like that of a miser, who has a coin in his pocket, and keeps his attention on it all the time.

Only by practicing in this manner, is one able to achieve results.

A hunter plays a drum in the jungle to attract the deer, and they are so much intoxicated by that music that they place their heads against the instrument and are caught by the hunter. The deer knows that it will be caught, but it is so intensely attracted and influenced by the sound of a drum that it becomes powerless to resist and rushes towards it to die. It does not turn back. A snake listens to the sound of a been and, without caring for the dire consequences, comes and dances to its tune.

Similarly, a devotee, no matter in what circumstances he may be – poor or rich, ill or well, awake or asleep, standing or sitting – should remember Him and become so absorbed in Simran, that he becomes utterly oblivious of his body. By doing so, the soul ascends to higher spiritual regions.

Kabir Sahib describes the prerequisites for Simran:

तन थिर मन थिर बचन थिर, सुरत निरत थिर होय।
कह कबीर इस पलक को, कलप न पावै कोय।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह-2 (सुमिरन का अंग 26, पृ० 100)

Mind should be still, body should be motionless, tongue should be quiet, and surat (the hearing power), and nirat (the seeing power) should act in unison and attain equanimity. Such a state, even for a moment, is infinitely superior to a million years of outer worship.

Guru Gobind Singh says in Akaal Stuti (Praise of the Lord):

एक चित जिह छिन इक ध्याइयो। काल फास के बीच न आइयो।।

-- दसम ग्रन्थ (अकाल उस्तत 10)

He who meditates upon Him with single mind even for an instant, does not come within the trap of death. (Sridasam.org p.11)

Inner Ascent and Realization through Simran

If the Repetition of the Holy Names is carried out in accordance with the directions of the Master and in a proper way, the devotee achieves wondrous results within. The soul currents that permeate every pore of the body withdraw from the nine apertures and collect at the Tenth Gate, which lies between the eyes. The body then becomes completely numb. Owing to centripetal tendencies, the disciple begins to behold scenes in the spiritual regions and sees stars and the sun and the moon. Guru Nanak says,

तारा चड़िआ लमा किउ नदरि निहालिआ राम।।
सेवक पूर करमा सतिगुरि सबदि दिखालिआ राम।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (तुखारी म० 1, पृ० 1110)

In the sky has arisen a meteor; only the blessed one with the Grace of the Master can behold its splendour. Through the Word, Guru shows the way and the seeker attains fulfilment.

Hazrat Ibrahim attests to having seen the meteor. The Vedas, likewise, mention this brightness. Maulana Rumi says,

पाए–हिम्मत बर ख़ुरो–बर माह निह, सर बराँ ऐवानो–आं दरगाह निह।

-- मसनवी मौलाना रूमी (दफ़्तर 6, पृ० 476)

You should cross the region of the moon and the sun within yourself, and lay your soul at the feet of the Master.

A reference in the Upanishads says,

नीहारधूमार्कानिलानलानां खद्योतविद्युत्स्फटिकशशीनाम् ।
एतानि रूपाणि पुरःसराणि ब्रह्मण्यभिव्यक्तिकराणि योगे।।

-- श्वेताश्वतरोपनिषद् (2:11)

A seeker in his spiritual transport witnesses mist, smoke, sun, fire, air, fire-flies, flashes of lightning and the moon within.

After the devotee crosses these phenomena, he beholds the Radiant Form of the Master, who after that, is ever by the side of the disciple, and who guides the soul to the higher regions, ultimately taking it to the Court of the Lord. It is

by focusing our attention on this resplendent Form, that we make it stay with us.

Maulana Rumi says,

फ़िक्र आं बाशद किह् बिकुशायद रहे, राह आं बाशद किह् पेश आयद शहे।
शाह आं बाशद किह् अज़ खुद शाह बुवद, नै ब–मख़ज़नहा ओ गौहर शाह बुवद।

-- मसनवी मौलाना रूमी (दफ़्तर 2, पृ० 302)

Only that method of Repetition of the Holy Names is correct, by which the inner way (for spiritual transport) is opened. Only that Path is correct which leads to the Radiant Form of the Master, the King of Kings. Such a King as does not have to depend upon treasures of gems and diamonds, but who is sovereign within Himself.

Regarding Simran, the Yog Sutra of Patanjali says,

स्वाध्यायादिप्रयोगः।।

-- पातंजल योगसूत्र (साधन पाद 2:44)

Simran leads to manifestation of the deity.

Vyasa Rishi, in his commentary on this sutra, states:

स्वाध्यायादिप्रयोगः। देवा ऋषयः सिद्धाश्च स्वाध्यायशीलस्य दर्शनं गच्छन्ति कार्ये चास्य वर्तन्त इति।।

Gods, sages and seers pay homage to a person who repeats the Holy Names.

Such statements as these show that all that Simran promises is realizable.

In the early stages, considerable effort has to be made to carry out Simran, but as practice is gained, Simran goes on automatically. The varied phenomena of the spiritual planes come into view, and also the Radiant Form of the Master and the rulers of the inner realms. Even God's presence is felt to be very close. Yogis and Sufis have all crossed the lower centres by means of Simran. This practice is both natural and easy.

Tulsi Das mentions the potency of Simran in Ramachritramanas:

मंत्र परम लघु जासु बस बिधि हरि हर सुर सर्ब।
महामत्त गजराज कहुँ बस कर अंकुस खर्ब।।

-- श्रीरामचरितमानस (1:256)

The Mantra or Repetition appears to be insignificant; but Brahma (Creator), Vishnu (Sustainer) and Shankar (Destroyer) are under its control in the same way as the mad elephant is under the control of a small goad held by the driver.

Guru Nanak mentions in Jap Ji:

इक दू जीभौ लख होहि लख होवहि लख वीस।।
लखु लखु गेड़ा आखीअहि एकु नामु जगदीस।।
एतु राहि पति पवड़ीआ चड़ीऐ होइ इकीस।।
सुणि गला आकास की कीटा आई रीस।।
नानक नदरी पाईऐ कूड़ी कूड़ै ठीस।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (जप जी म० 1, पृ० 7)

If I had a hundred-thousand tongues, and these were then multiplied twenty times more; with each tongue, I would repeat, hundreds of thousands of times, the Name of the One, the Lord of the Universe.

Along this path to our Husband Lord, we climb the steps of the ladder, and come to merge with Him. Hearing of the etheric realms, even worms long to come back home. O Nanak, by His Grace, He is obtained. False are the boastings of the false.

This is the only method, by which the soul meets its Lord and becomes one with Him. But this state is realized only with the Grace of the Lord. Our own efforts are utterly futile. But by constant Simran, one awakens super-consciousness and attains the state of everlasting tranquillity and peace.

Tennyson, the Poet Laureate of England, in his memoirs furnishes some hints about the super-conscious state that results from Simran:

A kind of waking trance I have frequently had, from boyhood onwards, when I have been all alone. This has generally come upon me through repeating my own name two or three times to myself silently till all at once, as it were, out of the intensity of consciousness of individuality, the individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being, and this is not a confused state, but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest, the wisest of the wisest, utterly beyond words, where death was a laughable impossibility, the loss of personality (if

so it were), seemingly but the only true life. I am ashamed of my feeble description. Have I not said the state is utterly beyond words? (Letter written to Mr. B.P.Blood, May 7th, 1874)

Tennyson would rise to this state of super-consciousness simply by repeating his own name.

Soul is of the essence of the Lord. You acquire the form you think about and have to return to it. As ye think, so ye become. If the essence thinks of its own source, which is all Consciousness, it will merge in the source and attain the eternal and everlasting state.

A Muslim Saint, Jami has very aptly described the greatness of Simran:

तू जुज़वी हक़्क़ कुल्ल आनस्त, अंदेशाए–कुल्ल कुनी कुल्ल बाशी।

-- जामी साहिब

The soul is the essence, and the Lord is the source. When it remembers the Lord one-pointedly, it becomes the Lord.

The bhringhi (a kind of wasp) has the capacity of turning another insect into its own kind by giving it attention. Kabir says,

सुमिरन सों मन लाइये, जैसे कीट भिरंग।
कबीर बिसारै आप को, होय जाय तेहि रंग।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह-2 (सुमिरन का अंग 12, पृ० 98)

You should also carry out God's Simran in such a way as to merge in Him and to become Him.

One, who by merging in the Light of the Lord, has become that Light, no longer remains a mere human being. Whomsoever we contemplate, Him we become.

Once Hazrat Bayazeed Bustami became so engrossed in the remembrance of God that he became oblivious to his own separate existence, and when he peered within, he beheld nothing but God. In this state of ecstasy he started saying that he was God.

मन खुदायम मन खुदायम मन खुदा, फ़ारिग़म अज़ किब्रो–कीना व–अज़ हवा।

-- कुल्लियाते-फ़रीदुद्दीन अत्तार (पृ० 1225)

His disciples, who were greatly surprised, asked him later, when they got an opportunity of talking to him:

O Master, according to you, God never takes the form of a man, and yet a short while ago you said you were God. Are you not a body?

Hazrat Bustami denied having said so and told them that someone else might have done so. He further said,

If you hear me say such a thing again, punish me according to Muslim law.

After a few days, the Master again was seized in the same way and began repeating that he was God. The disciples sprang up, drew their swords, and tried to kill him. It is noted in Maulana Rumi's Masnavi, that whoever directed his sword at the Master's head, had his own head cut off; whoever tried to cut his hands, has his own hands severed. Whatever part of the Master's body they tried to cut, they lost the corresponding part of their own body. Meanwhile, the Master continued exclaiming that he was God. When Hazrat Bustami was asked to explain the reason for this, he smilingly said,

One who remembers the Lord, becomes Him. He is beyond the reach of a sword or of swordsmen.

When Tulsi Sahib came to stay at the residence of Baji Rao II, he said,

रहूँ री बिदेह देह दरसाऊ।

-- तुलसी साहिब की शब्दावली भाग-2 (पृ० 40)

I live without a body, although I am seen in it.

The people tried to catch hold of him but they could not do so.

हमरै स्रवणु सिमरनु हरि कीरतनु हउ हरि बिनु रहि न सकउ हउ इकु खिनु।।
जैसे हंसु सरवर बिनु रहि न सकै तैसे हरि जनु किउ रहै हरि सेवा बिनु।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (असावरी म० 4, पृ० 369)

The remembrance of God is so amazingly intoxicating that those who attain it do not wish to be separated from the Lord even for a moment. Even as the swan cannot live without the pond, how can the Lord's slave live without serving Him?

Kabir says,

सुमिरन सों मन लाइये, जैसे पानी मीन।
प्रान तजै जल बीछुरे, सत कबीर कहि दीन।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-2 (सुमिरन का अंग 13, पृ० 99)

Remember the Name of the Lord with the same intensity of love as the fish has for water. It does not stand separation from water, and dies.

If we were to be divested of His Name, our life would not be worth living. If a person were to remember God constantly, he would awaken into super-consciousness. But this is a state, which can be achieved only with the Grace and blessing of the Lord. One who gains this state even for a moment, gets life everlasting.

Precepts of Simran

The Saints tell us that we are all accustomed to repeat certain names. How good it would be, if we were to turn our attention to the Name of God! Simran gives pleasure and removes pain. By doing the Simran of the Lord, one merges in Him.

Many people perform their worldly tasks with their hands and feet. Their minds remain free. Employ your hands and feet in work, and your mind in the remembrance of the Lord. If one is to succeed in this practice, he should carry out Simran at all times, whether awake or asleep, just as the hands of a clock move ceaselessly.

Everybody thinks of God in adversity, but if one were to think of Him with love at all times, then no pain would ever visit him. Pain is the result of sin. By forgetting God, one moves away from Him. In this way, he falls victim to the endless cycle of births and deaths.

If he were to carry out Simran, when in fortunate circumstances, his willpower and mind would grow strong. Even if a calamity should befall him, he would remain indifferent to it. If a person has failed to do Simran during a time of ease, but has taken to it only at the time of a reverse, or on falling ill, or on getting involved in a lawsuit, little can be expected from it. If Simran were to be done ceaselessly, all cares and anxieties would vanish. Then the mind would not give up Simran even for a second.

Kabir says,

दुख में सुमिरन सब करैं, सुख में करै न कोय।
जो सुख में सुमिरन करै, तो दुख काहे होय।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-2 (सुमिरन का अंग 4, पृ० 98)

Everybody remembers Him in times of distress, and nobody does so during felicity. If one were to remember Him while leading a life of ease, why should pain ever visit him?

सुख में सुमिरन ना किया, दुख में कीया याद।
कह कबीर ता दास की, कौन सुनै फिरियाद।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-2 (सुमिरन का अंग 5, पृ० 98)

When Simran is not done during comfort and is remembered only during grief, who can ever answer such a supplication?

The Adi Granth has placed great emphasis on Simran.

सासि सासि न घड़ी विसरै पलु मूरतु दिनु राते।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी म० 5, पृ० 247)

Remember the Lord with every breath. Forget Him not even for a moment.

Likewise, have Muslim Saints emphasized its great need:

फ़ा ज़कुरूनी अज़कुरकुम।

-- कुरान मजीद (2:152)

The Lord has thus ordained: 'You remember me and I shall remember you.'

Hazrat Mohammed says,

Persons who repeat the Holy Names of God have angels around them. The Grace of God protects them. They enjoy peace and bliss. God remembers them.

In the Hadis it is stated:

A person who intends to be near God should contact Incarnate in the flesh (a Perfect Master), because in Him resides always the remembrance of the Names of God.

Further, the Hadis says,

I am a close companion of him who thinks of Me. I love him who loves Me.

Farid-ud-Din Attar says,

दर नमाज़ आं निगार रा दीदन, ज़ाहिरो–बातिन ऐ पिसर बशुमार।
दर इबादत कसे शरीक़ मकुन, जांकिह् ला–यशरिक अस्त हुकमे–निगार।

In your prayers behold your Beloved. Both within and without live in His remembrance, and remember Him inwardly as well as

outwardly. In His worship, make no one else a partner, for God is One without a second.

रोज़ा हिफ़्ज़े–दिल अस्त अज़ ख़तरात, पस बुवद अज़ मुशाहदा इफ़्तार।

-- फ़रीदुद्दीन अत्तार

The real fast consists in withdrawing the senses from sensual pursuits and instead, employing them in His remembrance.

Simran is Possible Only with the Grace of the Lord and Through the Kindness of a Master.

Simran is a precious practice. It is only through great good luck, that a person takes to Simran. The secret of Simran one can learn from a True Master alone.

Time for Simran

Simran should be done with every breath – sitting, standing, walking, eating – one should so remember Him with one-pointed attention, that he becomes inseparable from Him and does not stray away. But special times for Simran are the night, the midnight and the Time of Elixir (from 3 a.m. to 6 a.m.). Simran during these periods is highly fruitful.

Hafiz enjoins:

मरो बख़्वाब किह् हाफ़िज़ बबारगाहे–क़बूल,
ज़ि विरदे–नीम–शब–ओ–दरसगाहे–सुबह हुसूल।

-- हाफ़िज़

Do not waste your time in sleep, because the remembrance of God at midnight and in the early morning hours, merits special blessings from the Lord.

Night-time is particularly suited for Simran, because of quiet and solitude. At this time, the soul currents are not scattered. With the rising of the sun, these currents greatly spread out. Dawn and dusk are times of union (night with day and day with night), and these times have a special spiritual and magnetic power latent in them. The result is that we are then completely saturated with our Master. At these times, without any effort, concentration comes automatically.

Therefore, these two periods are very profitable for Repetition of the Holy Names. Carry out Repetition and Contemplation during the Time of Elixir, after leaving your bed. Get over drowsiness and lassitude by deep breathing and some light exercise. At this time the mind is quiet and fresh and it easily concentrates.

The Practice of Repetition of Names is for Everybody

The practice of Repetition is for all – rich and poor – and whoever does it, becomes eligible for its reward. But the Simran should be self-less. King or subject, man or woman, of whatever caste, creed or colour they may be, all carry out Simran. Whoever does the Simran of Naam (Word), gains salvation. He is highest of all and is truly fortunate.

Everybody remembers the Lord for the fulfilment of desires. One does so for a wife, another yearns for a son, and still other asks for wealth. Everyone has a motive behind his Simran. Of course, the objects of desires are achieved, but they do not accompany one, when he dies. Even his body remains behind. What else can ever go with one at the time of his departure? Kabir says,

राजा राना राव रँक, बड़ा जो सुमिरै नाम।
कह कबीर बड्डों बड़ा, जो सुमिरै निःकाम।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-2 (सुमिरन का अंग 2, पृ० 98)

He who carries out self-less Simran, is the sublimest of all.

This means that we should beg of God naught else but God.

The scriptures tell us that all things in this world are transitory. They are truly shadow shapes that vanish in a moment. Therefore, begging for anything other than God Himself, is to suffer untold misery. So long as the Simran is done with an ulterior motive, we are asking God for objects of the world, and thus bringing further privations upon ourselves. It is only the self-less Simran that is acceptable to God. A Muslim Saint, Bu-Ali Shah Qalandar says,

दिल मकुन अज़ फ़िक्रे–बातिलहा स्याह,
अज़ ख़ुदा गैर अज़ ख़ुदा दीगर मख़्वाह।।

-- मसनवी बू-अली शाह क़लन्दर (पृ० 37)

Do not blacken your heart with useless thoughts. Ask not from God, aught else but Him.

Fruits of Simran

The Sikh Scriptures detail many a benefit from Simran:

जा कउ मुसकलु अति बणै ढोई कोइ न देइ।।
लागू होए दुसमना साक भि भजि खले।।
सभो भजै आसरा चुकै सभु असराउ।।
चिति आवै ओसु पारब्रहमु लगै न ततती वाउ।।
साहिबु निताणिआ का ताणु।।
आइ न जाई थिरु सदा गुर सबदी सचु जाणु।।
जे को होवै दुबला नंग भुख की पीर।।
दमड़ा पलै ना पवै ना को देवै धीर।।
सुआरथु सुआउ न को करे ना किछु होवै काजु।।
चिति आवै ओसु पारब्रहमु ता निहचलु होवै राजु।।
जा कउ चिंता बहुतु बहुतु देही विआपै रोगु।।
गृसति कुटंबि पलेटिआ कदे हरखु कदे सोगु।।
गउणु करे चहु कुंट का घड़ी न बैसणु सोइ।।
चिति आवै ओसु पारब्रहमु तनु मनु सीतलु होइ।।
कामि करोधि मोहि विस कीआ किरपन लोभि पिआरु।।
चारे किलविख उनि अघ कीए होआ असुर संघारु।।
पोथी गीत कवित किछु कदे न करनि धरिआ।।
चिति आवै ओसु पारब्रहमु ता निमख सिमरत तरिआ।।
सासत सिंमृति बेद चारि मुखागर बिचरे।।
तपे तपीसर जोगीआ तीरथि गवनु करे।।
खटु करमा ते दुगुणे पूजा करता नाइ।।
रंगु न लगी पारब्रहम ता सरपर नरके जाइ।।
राज मिलक सिकदारीआ रस भोगण बिसथार।।
बाग सुहावे सोहणे चलै हुकमु अफार।।
रंग तमासे बहु बिधी चाइ लगि रहिआ।।
चिति न आइओ पारब्रहमु ता सरप की जूनि गइआ।।
बहुतु धनाढि अचारवंतु सोभा निरमल रीति।।
मात पिता सुत भाईआ साजन संगि परीति।।
लसकर तरकसबंद बंद जीउ जीउ सगली कीत।।
चिति न आइओ पारब्रहमु ता खड़ि रसातलि दीत।।

काइआ रोगु न छिद्रु किछु ना किछु काड़ा सोगु।।
मिरतु न आवी चिति तिसु अहिनिसि भोगै भोगु।।
सभ किछु कीतोनु आपणा जीइ न संक धरिआ।।
चिति न आइओ पारब्रहमु जमकंकर वसि परिआ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सिरीराग म० 5, पृ० 70)

When you are confronted with terrible hardships, and no one offers you any support, when your friends turn into enemies, and even your relatives have deserted you, and when all support has given way, and all hope has been lost—If you then come to remember the Supreme Lord God, even the hot wind shall not touch you. Our Lord and Master is the Power of the powerless. He does not come or go; He is Eternal and Permanent. Through the Guru's Shabd, He is known as the True One.

If you are weakened by the pains of hunger and poverty, with no money in your pockets, and no one will give you any comfort, and no one will satisfy your hopes and desires, and none of your works is accomplished. if you then come to remember the Supreme Lord God, you shall obtain the eternal kingdom.

When you are plagued by great and excessive anxiety, and diseases of the body; when you are wrapped up in the attachments of household and family, sometimes feeling joy, and then other times sorrow; when you are wandering around in all four directions, and you cannot sit or sleep even for a moment. If you come to remember the Supreme Lord God, then your body and mind shall be cooled and soothed.

When you are under the power of sexual desire, anger and worldly attachment, or a greedy miser in love with your wealth; if you have committed the four great sins and other mistakes; even if you are a murderous fiend, who has never taken the time to listen to sacred books, hymns and poetry. If you then come to remember the Supreme Lord God, and contemplate Him, even for a moment, you shall be saved.

People may recite by heart the Shastras, the Smritees and the four Vedas; they may be ascetics, great, self-disciplined Yogis; they may visit sacred shrines of pilgrimage and perform the six ceremonial rituals, over and over again, performing worship services and ritual baths. Even so, if they have not embraced love for the Supreme Lord God, then they shall surely go to hell.

You may possess empires, vast estates, authority over others, and the enjoyment of myriads of pleasures; you may have delightful and beautiful gardens, and issue unquestioned commands; you may have enjoyments and entertainments of all sorts and kinds, and continue to enjoy exciting pleasures. And yet, if you do not come to remember the Supreme Lord God, you shall be reincarnated as a snake.

You may possess vast riches, maintain virtuous conduct, have a spotless reputation and observe religious customs; you may have the loving affections of mother, father, children, siblings and friends; you may have armies well-equipped with weapons, and all may salute you with respect; But still, if you do not come to remember the Supreme Lord God, then you shall be taken and consigned to the most hideous hell!

You may have a body free of disease and deformity, and have no worries or grief at all; you may be unmindful of death, and night and day revel in pleasures; you may take everything as your own, and have no fear in your mind at all; but still, if you do not come to remember the Supreme Lord God, you shall fall under the power of the Messenger of Death.

Simran puts an end to sins, pain and doubts. It removes anger and ego. It takes away cares, all ills, and the three attributes. It rids us of ghosts and goblins. It bestows peace and bliss. By Simran, a person is emancipated, and becomes a good example and a spiritual benefactor. He becomes a real philanthropist, has few needs, and becomes a leader of men.

The devotees of the Lord are alive only through Simran, because without thinking of the Lord, they cannot live even for a moment. They are forever absorbed in His Name.

Simran banishes fear of death and frees one from the cycle of births and deaths. It removes obstacles and difficulties, and pleasure and pain. It grants miraculous powers, esoteric knowledge, and the merit of recitals and penances. Duality is shed, the dross and filth of the mind wear off, and the refulgence of God's Name becomes manifest. The devotee is ever at the feet of the Master. He gains glory in the Court of the Lord and, crossing the ocean of phenomena, he attains everlasting salvation.

A person doing Simran remains detached, even while he lives among people. The fruits are not obtained by the Simran done at the behest of mind, but by the Simran revealed to us by a Perfect Adept. m

7

CONTEMPLATION (*Dhyan* ध्यान)

Dhyan is a Sanskrit word derived from the root 'Dhyayi ध्यै', which means to contemplate some form, to remember it, to repeat it, to think about it, and to collect the soul currents at their headquarters. Dhyan connotes both seeing and thinking. To fix the attention at any point is also called Dhyan. This leads to seeing spiritual scenes, Light and Radiance. If these phenomena do not appear, you may take it that Dhyan has not been successful.

Many people claim that they contemplate upon the all-pervading Lord. Omnipresence is a quality of the sky (Ether). Its contemplation is that of ether. So long as the inner vision is not awakened, the spiritual scenes are not beheld.

A man cannot live without carrying on some form of contemplation. Whatever vocation one is engaged in, he thinks about it before retiring at night, and forms mental pictures of it. Simran and Dhyan are interdependent. We think of the world and contemplate on its forms, with the result that we come again and again into this world.

The question arises as to what one should think about so that he need not return to this mundane sphere. Kabir Sahib advises:

सो धिआनु धरहु जि बहुरि न धरना।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी भगत कबीर, पृ० 327)

Undertake such contemplation as will end transmigration. (Kabir)

What is such a Dhyan?

The Sikhs Scriptures state that Dhyan signifies knowing and listening to unspeakable Dhun, the Divine Melody.

Guru's Shabd (Word) is also known as the supportless Gyan-Dhyan. Dhyan is the second step of the spiritual ladder and is born of Simran.

So long as a person has not seen God, how can he contemplate upon His form? God is Shabd. He is love. It is a language of silence. He alone attains Him, who loves Him. In the first instance, it is essential that we should contact a Master, who is Shabd and love-incarnate; who has merged himself in the Lord; who is no longer a drop, but has become the ocean. Soul is in the Lord, and the Lord is in the soul. Therefore, so long as we do not see the Lord, we should contemplate upon the form of a God-Man.

Whenever we close our eyes, we behold scenes of the world such as family and children, hearth and home, wealth and possessions; we constantly dwell upon the world and its objects with the result that every cell of our mind is immersed in it. It is for this reason, that we are firmly tied to the world. We do not know how to contemplate upon the form of the Lord. The one we have to contemplate upon, is beyond the three worlds. So long as we do not meet Him, on whom shall we contemplate?

Let us examine the objects of this world to discover what is worthy of our contemplation. The entire world is comprised of the five elements, viz., Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Ether. Accordingly, everything in this world is divided into five parts:

- Those beings that have all the five elements active in them. In this category are all human beings.
- Those that have four elements, namely, earth, water, fire and air, active in them. This category relates to quadrupeds.
- Those that have only three elements, namely, water, fire and air active in them. This is the category of birds.
- Those that have two elements, namely fire and air active in them. This category includes reptiles, lizards and the like.
- Those that have only one element – water – predominant in them. These are members of the vegetable kingdom.

If a human being, in whom all the five elements are active, were to contemplate on the forms in whom one, two, three, or four elements are present, he would go down to their level, for whatever one contemplates that he becomes. Is it therefore desirable that a man should contemplate on the form of a man? If so, why? We shall explain it by means of an example:

A room contains a number of radio sets. Only those sets that are connected with batteries or an electric current receive the news. Those that are disconnected do not do so. Similarly, only such persons, as have opened their inner vision and are in communion with the Lord, are the ones worthy of our worship and contemplation.

Therefore, Sikh and other Scriptures emphasize the need of contemplation upon the form of a Master, who is one with the Lord. Such a course is conducive to valuable benefits. God is manifest in the Master, because the Master is God in human form. Therefore, the contemplation of the Master is really that of the Lord, and His worship is true service to the Lord.

The highest form of contemplation is that of God, or connecting our consciousness with Shabd शब्द, which is God-in-Action, and listening to it, is contemplation of the person in whom God is manifest. The contemplation of God is impossible, for we have not seen Him. Therefore, we should first contemplate on the form of the Master, because we can see Him, and by contemplating upon Him, we are enabled to contact Naam नाम.

The contemplation of the form of the Master may be likened to seeing a glowing bulb, the first perception of which is that of light, seeing which we are oblivious of the glass that holds it.

In the initial stages of Simran सिमरन, the contemplation of the physical form of the Master is necessary. After that, the disciple contemplates on the Radiant Form of the Master, which remains with him in the spiritual planes. This form subsequently merges in Shabd, its real form.

The Theosophists say:

The Master souls have their radiance spread out to extensive spiritual planes.

With the manifestation of the Radiant Form, the disciple's devotion is half complete. When the Refulgent Form appears within, the disciple should fix his attention in it, so much so that he completely merges himself in this form and can no longer distinguish between himself and the Master.

मन तू शुदम तू मन शुदी, मन तन शुदम तू जां शुदी,
ता कस नगोयद बअद अज़ीं मन दीगरम तू दीगरी।

-- अमीर ख़ुसरो (पृ० 112)

I have become You, and You me. I have become a body, and You have become my soul, my very life, so much so that none can say we have a separate entity. (Amir Khusro)

According to scriptures dealing with the soul, when the course of contemplation is complete, the disciple, the discipline, and the Deity all merge into one. The worshipped and the worshipper become one, as the caterpillar becomes a butterfly and loses its own identity. Such a state (Fana- fil-Sheikh) is known as merging in the Master.

But the Master has already merged in the Lord (Fana-fil-Allah), with the result that the disciple also merges into Him. Whatever you dwell upon, that you become.

A peasant called on a certain Saint and the Saint asked him, "Whom do you love?" He answered that he loved his buffalo. Whatever you love, reflection on it stills the mind. Before long, his thoughts began to concentrate and, because of dwelling upon the buffalo, he mentally assumed its form. Thereupon the Saint opened the door of the room and asked the peasant to come out through it. The peasant replied. "How can I come out through this small opening? My horns are too wide to pass through it." Such is the power of contemplation!

In the Gita, Lord Krishna says,

ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम्।
मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (4:11)

The way I am remembered, in the same way I remember. Whoever reflects upon and worships a form with faith, he assumes that form.

Again,

यान्ति देवव्रता देवान्पितृन्यान्ति पितृव्रताः।
भूतानि यान्ति भूतेज्या यान्ति मद्याजिनो ऽपि माम्।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (9:25)

Those who yearn for Me, they come and merge in Me.

In the Kathopanishad, the body of man has been likened to a chariot, of which the senses are the horses. Like unbroken horses, they are always running after sense pleasures. The mind is the bridle, and safety lies in pulling and in keeping it under control, which is, however not so easy.

आत्मानँ रथिनं विद्धि शरीरँ रथमेव तु।
बुद्धिं तु सारथिं विद्ध मनः प्रग्रहमेव च।।

-- कठोपनिषद् (1:3:3)

Know the (individual) self as the master of the chariot, and the body as the chariot. Know the intellect as the charioteer, and the mind as verily the bridle.

The Gita says that the remedy lies in making the mind contemplate upon the form of the Master.

मय्येव मन आधत्स्व मयि बुद्धिं निवेशय।
निवसिष्यसि मय्येव अत ऊर्ध्वं न संशय।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (12:8)

Fix your mind on Me alone, Let your thoughts dwell in Me. By doing so You will live in Me alone here after. Of this, there is no doubt.

यतो यतो निश्चलति मनश्चञ्चलमस्थिरम् ।
ततस्ततो नियम्यैतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत्।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (6:26)

From wherever the mind wanders due to its flickering and unsteady nature, one must certainly withdraw it and bring it back under the control of the Self.

Just as we cannot scale the wall of a fort without the help of a ladder; even so, we cannot reach the Lord without contemplation of the Master. It is concentration that takes us

from the Physical to the Astral, from the Astral to the Causal, and beyond the Causal to the Lord.

The Radiant Form of the Master manifests only in pure and sincere hearts. In an impure heart, it simply cannot reside. Hafiz says,

रूयश बचश्मे–पाक तवां दीद चूं हिलाल,
हर दीदा जाय जल्वा–ए–आं माह पारा नीस्त।।

-- दीवाने-हाफ़िज़ (पृ० 59)

The pure form of the Beloved can be seen only by pure eyes. Behold Him with pure and keen eyes – as a Muslim scans the sky on the Eid-eve. It is not every eye that can behold the Radiant Form of a True Master. It is the privilege of a rare and fortunate few.

The Upanishads, as well as the Bhagavad Gita, say that purity of mind and its cleanliness are regarded as essential prerequisites for contemplation and meditation.

त्रिरुन्नतं स्थाप्य समम् शरीरं हृदीन्द्रियाणि मनसा सन्निवेश्य।
ब्रह्मोडुपेन प्रतरेत विद्वान स्रोतांसि सर्वाणि भयानकानि।।

-- श्वेताश्वतरोपनिषद् (2:8)

Placing the body in a straight posture, holding the chest, throat and head erect, and drawing the senses and the mind into the heart, the knowing one should cross over all the fearful currents (of the mind) by means of the raft of Brahman.

युक्ताहारविहारस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु।
युक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्य योगो भवति दुःखहा।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (6:17)

But those who are temperate in eating and recreation, balanced in work, and regulated in sleep, can mitigate all sorrows by practicing Yoga.

The purity must be both inner and outer. The outer comes first, and later, with practice, comes the inner. Those who are vile and whose mind is restless can never succeed in contemplation, and will suffer pain and privation. So long as contemplation on the form of the Master is not achieved, the soul currents cannot collect within.

The contemplative faculty of the soul is called 'Nirat निरत'; that is, the seeing faculty of the soul. The soul has two

faculties. One is 'Surat सुरत', which means the hearing faculty, and the other is 'Nirat', which means the seeing faculty. So long as the seeing faculty is not developed, mere listening to the Shabd does not bestow the fullest possible benefit. By fixing the attention within, one is able to behold many spiritual regions. So long as the seeing faculty does not develop, the hearing faculty of the soul does not ascend to higher planes. By developing the seeing power of the soul, we achieve Dhyan ध्यान. And it is this alone, that leads us to true knowledge.

The power of contemplation is innate and natural. Even the turtles and the swans are known to possess great powers of contemplation. It is said that through contemplation, they hatch their distantly laid eggs. Among Hindus, gazing on the rising sun is regarded as a means to contemplation. Some people dwell upon the pictures of ancient Saints. This is contemplation of material and lifeless objects. In Dhyan, one may see pictures with frames, but these cannot lead one upward. Both pictures and idols are lifeless; they cannot draw one upward. Therefore a picture cannot pull us up. He alone can draw us to the spiritual regions, who frequents them himself. Contemplation on the form of ancient Saints can do us little good. Most of the pictures of such Saints are not true to life and are mere figments of imagination. Worship of the lifeless is prohibited in the Holy Scriptures.

The pictures of Saints help to keep alive their memory, but they are unable to give us what a living Master can. Tulsi Sahib goes so far as to say:

कल्प वृक्ष को चित्र लख, कीनै बिनै हज़ार।
बित्त पावै ताहि सिउ, तुलसी कहे बिचार।।

-- तुलसी साहिब

Even if you should make a picture of the wishing-tree and pray to it a thousand times, you would gain nothing. If in place of a money-lender, you place his picture in his shop, it can never perform his tasks.

The New York American newspaper dated 30th March, 1933, reports a newly-invented instrument, which can deter-

mine from a photograph whether the person had died since the portrait was taken. The paper adds, "It detects the movement of 'life waves' or 'Z waves' on a photographic plate, and the stillness of these waves after the death of the subject was reported today by E. S. Shrapness-Smith, an authority on chemistry." He said, "Life, like a radio-station, emits a distinct type of wave. These human waves are transmitted to and fixed in a photographic plate. While the subject of the photograph is alive, the movement of the waves is lively. The moment the person dies, no matter how far distant from the photograph, the life waves cease to emanate from the plate. I am unable to reveal at present just what the instrument consists of, but it is based and depends on: radiation, magnetism, static electricity and current electricity."

There is nothing psychic or mysterious about it. It is the result of a new application of the laws of science.

This proves that the pictures or photographs of Saints, who are not alive today will not help us. Another factor is that most of the pictures of Saints, who have long since departed, are not exact replicas, but are mostly the result of the imagination of the artists who produced them. Besides, the worship of a lifeless thing is prohibited. The pictures or photographs of a Saint certainly remind us of our Master, but they can give us nothing more. It is only the living Master who can bestow His Grace on us. Among Muslim Saints, many methods are used to develop the seeing faculty of the soul (Nirat). They are called 'Nazri' or 'Basri', namely, relating to eyesight. They term this 'shughal' or practice. The well-known among them are:

- Shughal-i-Aftabi: In this the attention is fixed on the rising sun, and it is best done during winter. One gains miraculous powers. Amongst the Hindus, this practice is known as Traatak Dhyan त्राटक ध्यान.

- Shughal-i-Mansur: In this, a person lies flat on his back on the ground, with his face turned up. He relaxes his entire body and fixes his attention within at the eye centre. The yogis call it Shava Asan शव आसन.

- Shughal-i-Barzakh-i-Akbar: In this, while controlling the breath, the attention is fixed at the Third Eye. Many Muslim Saints practice this method, which was also a favourite with Prophet Mohammed. This is equivalent to contemplation on Trikuti त्रिकुटी– the second stage in spiritual transport – and is done, while sitting in the Padma Asan पद्म आसन.

- Shughal-i-Barzakh-i-Kabir: In this, the seeing power of the soul is fixed, within and without, on the form of a Master. As a result of the practice, one is able to achieve certain supernatural powers, and also unravel hidden secrets.

- Shughal-i-Isme-Zaat: In this, the disciple fixes his attention on the Light within, and is thus able to merge within himself.

- Shughal-i-Aiena: In this, a mirror is placed in front of the practitioner. He fixes his attention on the pupils of his own eyes as reflected in the mirror. By gazing steadfastly, the pupils of his eyes turn inwards, and he gains access to Nukta-i-Saveida or the Third Eye.

- Shughal-i-Neem-Khwabi: In this, one has to keep his eyes constantly open to avoid sleep. The result is that even in sleep, a person remains half awake.

- Shughal-i-Basait : In this, the seeing power of the soul (Nirat) has to be collected at the eye focus.

- Shughal-i-Mukaman Mahmudan or Shughal-i-Sultanan-Nasira: In this, the eyes are fixed on the tip of the nose, and the attention is then gradually taken to the root of the nose. Ultimately the attention goes within and gains entrance into the spiritual regions. The Yogis call it Chachari Mudra चाचरी मुद्रा.

The way to perform these practices can only be learned from a Master. If one practices them by oneself, they are dangerous. Of all the practices, Shughal-i-Barzakh-i-Kabir, in which the Master's form is contemplated both within and without, is the best. The Master's form takes the practitioner to inner realms and remains forever with him. The other practices take one up only to the astral region or the Causal region, but not beyond them.

In Dhyan Yoga, three kinds of contemplation are enumerated:

- **Sthoola** स्थूल (material)
- **Sookshma** सूक्ष्म (subtle or astral)
- **Noori** नूरी (luminous or radiant)

To gaze at the picture of a Master is the sthoola or material practice. When the soul currents collect, power of the soul gets focused on the lamp, the practice is known as Sookshma or the subtle method of contemplation. When the attention is fixed on the Kundalini कुण्डलिनी and it is awakened, the soul currents, leaving the body, collect at the eye focus and the soul, ascending above, rises into the refulgent regions. These constitute the Noori or the Luminous Dhyan. By practicing this, one is able to behold his astral body.

All these qualities and benefits accrue through contemplating on the form of a living Master, in body and flesh. The Master lives in the Physical world, through his physical form. Through the astral form, he gains access to the Astral regions, and through the causal form, he moves in the luminous or Causal region. This refulgence is the manifestation of Truth. By contemplating upon it, one attains the highest spiritual development.

Kabir says,

सांस सांस पर परख ले, घट महिं प्रीतम छब्ब।
चूक न साधन से कभी, अवसर पाया अब्ब।।

-- संत कबीर

With every breath, contemplate upon the form of your Beloved. The gift of the human form is unique. Do not tarry in carrying out this practice.

Khusro, a devoted disciple of his Master said,

ऐ मानी–ए–नक़्क़ाश–चीं रौ सूरते–यारम बबीं,
या सूरते कश ईं चुनीं या तर्क कुन सूरतगरी।

-- अमीर ख़ुसरो

O you renowned artist of China, look at my Beloved! Either paint an exact replica of His beauty or give up your art.

Just as a small child looks at an object with a fixed gaze, without blinking its eyes, so should you accustom yourself to gazing intently at the beautiful face of your Master. Then see how your doubts vanish, and how you attract Reality. By practicing this method daily, the disciple grows fearless. Were such a person to look at a snake or a lion, the latter would not attack him. The Third Eye of a man wields immense power. It is the gateway to all the higher spiritual realms. It is through Satsang, that this practice can be developed. It is the first step in our travels through the spiritual regions.

In order to obtain spiritual wealth, we have to go to a living Master and contemplate upon His form. In the Sikh Scriptures, it is a living Master and His contemplation that alone are considered really and fully beneficial. The spiritual currents that emanate from Him are surcharged with mind and soul force. Therefore, His company and contemplation enable us to benefit from the waves of spiritual consciousness that radiate from Him. It is for this reason that every Saint has contemplated upon the form of His Master, and that the Saints will continue to do so.

The contemplation of the Master bestows many advantages. Through reflection, the disciple imbibes all the inner qualities and virtues of the Master. The mind of the Master is motionless. By contemplating upon Him, the mind of the disciple also becomes still.

Patanjali says in the Yoga Sutras that Contemplation of persons, who are free of worldly desires, bestows stability of mind.

वीतरागविषयं वा चित्तम्, स्वप्ननिद्राज्ञानालम्बवनं वा, यथाभिमतध्यानाद्वा।

-- पातंजल योगसूत्र (1:37-39)

Consciousness settles by focusing on things that do not inspire attachment, or by reflecting on insights culled from sleep and dreaming, or through meditative absorption in any desired object.

Then, too, remembrance of the Lord dwells in the heart of the Master. He even beholds the refulgence of the Lord. By Simran and Dhyan, the disciple begins to remember the Lord automatically and becomes worthy of witnessing the

inner scenes. The lovers of the Master's form, get tied to the Master. They become oblivious of the body and also of the world.

The Master is free from birth and death. Gurumukhs are the devotees of such a Master. One whose attention is fixed on the form of the Master, one who loves naught save the Master – who can ever make such a person return to the world?

On one occasion Maulana Rumi fell ill on account of separation from his Master. Sadruddin, another Saint, came to enquire about his health. He prayed:

May God restore you to health.

At this Maulana Rumi replied:

May health be welcome to you. Between the lover and the beloved, only a thin veil (of this body) remains. Do you not wish that this veil should vanish and the Light should merge in the Refulgent Source?

He further said,

चिह् दानी तू किह् दर बातिन चिह् शाहे हमनशीं
दारम, रुख़े–ज़र्रीने–मन मनिगर किह् पाए आहनीं दारम।

-- दीवाने-शम्स तब्रेज़ (पृ० 232)

You do not know the King, who is sitting within me. Do not look at my outer face hidden behind hoops of steel.

When Khusro became completely dyed in the hue of his Master, people commenced to taunt him as an idol-worshipper. He said,

खलक़ मी गोयद किह् ख़ुसरो बुत परस्ती मी कुनद,
आरे आरे मी कुनम बा ख़लको–आलम कार नीस्त।

-- अमीर ख़ुसरो

People are ignorant of the Reality. They say that Khusro is an idol-worshipper. Let them say so, for I have no concern with the world and its people.

When we see the Radiant Form of the Master within, the soul is able by concentration to maintain a stable position, and begins to listen to the inner music. In this way, the Naam uke current flows and the devotee remains immersed in its enjoyment. The mind then takes to Naam with fervour.

The more you contemplate, the more you will hear the Sound Current and greater the pull it will exercise on the soul. The Sound Current draws the soul to higher regions, and through contemplation enables it to stay there. Dhyan carries the soul to spiritual regions within. In this way, the soul ascends to these regions, but it is the privilege of a rare Gurumukh गुरुमुख (true devotee of a Perfect Master). This contemplation is in the inner sky, and in consequence, the soul, getting rid of sense pleasures, fears and all other fetters, gains access to its real Home.

Simran bestows concentration. Concentration leads to the Radiant Form of the Master. Contemplation enables the soul to stay there, and the Divine Melody is heard.

In this connection Hafiz says,

चू दीदम रूए–ख़ूबश सजदा करदम,
बहमदि–अल्लाहि निको किरदारम इम्शब।

-- दीवाने-हाफ़िज़ (पृ० 42)

When I had a glimpse of the handsome and charming face of my Master within, I bowed low and prayed, God be blest that tonight I have been so fortunate.

It is a well-known fact that love beautifies everything it touches. Laila was of dark complexion, but in the love-intoxicated eyes of Majnu, she was far beyond compare. If you wish to see Laila, see her with the eyes of Majnu.

It is true that love makes a beloved charming. But the Master's form is inherently very beautiful. To add full loveliness to it, He does not have to depend upon the imperfect love of human beings, nor does He stand in need of any artificial aids such as colours and perfumes.

The Radiant Form of the Master resides within every true disciple. When the soul withdraws from without and goes within, crossing the stars, the sun and the moon, it beholds His Refulgent Form. It is this radiance that bestows light to both the sun and the moon. Whoever goes within, sees His Wondrous Form.

We are wonder-struck to hear descriptions of the beautiful physical form of the Master, but if we manifest Him

within, we will find Him a thousand-fold more beautiful. By addressing the Lord, Hafiz says,

बसे हिक़ायते–हुस्नत शनीदा अम जानां,
कनू–किह् दीदमत अलहक़्क़, हज़ार चंदानी।

-- दीवाने-हाफ़िज़ (पृ० 397)

O Beloved, I have heard many a tale about your wondrous beauty; but now that I have beheld you within, I see that you are really a thousand times more wonderful than the tales depict you.

Shut your eyes and you will find nothing but darkness within. This darkness is even more pronounced than a completely moonless night. When the soul, withdrawing from without goes in, there come into view the stars, the sun and the moon. Beyond them, appears the Radiant Form of the Master. The Master does not come secretly, but flashes of light emanate from His Radiant Form in such a manner that the soul is irresistibly attracted towards it. In reality, this scene beggars description.

Hafiz has attempted to portray this inner vision, but how can one describe what is indescribable? He says,

बफ़रोगे–चिहरा ज़ुल्फ़त हमा शब ज़नद रहे–दिल,
चिह् दिलावर अस्त दुज़दे किह् बक़फ़ चिराग़ दारद।

-- दीवाने-हाफ़िज़ (पृ० 150)

The whole night His refulgence filled my heart with Light. What a bold thief He is to come in the darkness, but with what an aura of radiance He comes!

Contemplation of the Master's Form is wondrously rewarding. Those who think of the Master's Form gain honour and glory both here and beyond. All their desires are fulfilled. By merging in the Master, they attain God-realization.

Contemplation and Religion

In contemplation are contained all the formalities of religion. Religion is a unique thing, which is helpful in both the worlds. Without adopting it, man cannot be happy. Where religion is held as naught, spirituality fails to grow. Religion is the true fountain-head of life in this world, and the

next. Without religion, one cannot travel a step on the Path of Spirituality (Parmarth परमार्थ). The scriptures lay emphasis on first strengthening the foundation of religion, and thereafter devoting oneself to Naam नाम or Shabd शब्द; for without the former, the latter is devoid of benefits. Religion keeps everything in its proper place, in balance and in unison. It opens the inner vision, with the result that one learns the correct value of things. Thus, truth appears as truth, and untruth as untruth.

All prophets and Saints have stressed the need for religion. Lord Krishna mentions in the Gita:

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम्।।
परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम्।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (4:7-8)

Whenever evil predominates over virtue and religion is on the decline, I incarnate in every age in order to protect the righteous, to destroy the wicked, and to re-establish religion.

Similarly, says Guru Gobind Singh:

जाहि तहाँ तै धरमु चलाइ।। कबुधि करन ते लोक हटाइ।।

-- दसम ग्रन्थ (बचित्र नाटक, चौपाई 29)

Akaal (the Timeless) has sent me into this world, saying, "Go for the proliferation of Dharma (righteousness) and wean people away from evil actions." (Sridasam.org p.54)

The word 'Dharma धर्म' (religion) is derived from the root 'dhri धृ' which means to imbibe, to be supported by. It is a power which, affording support to the entire universe, keeps it stable. Some say that the world rests on the horns of a bullock. Others, that it is balanced on the forehead of 'Shesh Naag शेष नाग', the mythical snake. Guru Nanak in the Jap Ji settles the issue by saying:

धौलु धरमु दइआ का पूतु।। संतोखु थापि रखिआ जिनि सूति।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (जप जी म० 1, पृ० 3)

The mythical bull is Dharma, the son of compassion; That is what patiently holds the earth in its place.

What kind of Dharma sustains the world? One, that is born of mercy, and one that keeps the entire universe in a state of equilibrium and free from chaos by means of the tender cord of contentment.

The people who believe in God have their religion in Naam नाम, which sustains everything. As conscious co-workers of Naam, they follow its principles and surrender to His Will. They become attached to religion. They live by religion. They are religion-incarnate.

According to the Vishnu Puraan विष्णु–पुराण, religion has four main tenets:

- **Satya** सत्य, which means unchangeable permanence.
- **Yagya** यज्ञ, which literally means sacrifice, but esoterically refers to the practice of charity.
- **Pooja** पूजा, which means worship, good conduct, cleanliness.
- **Sumiran** सुमिरन, or the repetition of the Holy Names.

Ravi Das and Bhai Gurdas also say the same thing. Bhai Mani Singh, however, has described the four tenets of religion as follows:

- **Naam** नाम, Shabd, or Sound Current.
- **Charity** दान, which comprises mercy and sacrifice, to think of the good of others, to forgive, to consider everything as belonging to God, and to give it away to God's children.
- **Snana** स्नान, which means a bath. Esoterically, it comprises worship, good conduct and cleanliness; to withdraw the mind from wrong ways such as falsehood, violence and cheating; and to withdraw the intellect from evil thoughts and collect it at the Third Eye.
- **Gyana** ज्ञान or knowledge, which is the achievement of Truth.

Guru Ram Das says,

सतजुगि सभु संतोख सरीरा पग चारे धरमु धिआनु जीउ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (आसा म० 4, पृ० 445)

In the Golden Age of Sat Yuga, everyone embodies contentment and meditation; religion stands upon all four feet.

Fruits of Contemplation

Tulsi Sahib, the Saint of Hathras, says,

जिनके हिरदे गुर संत नहीं। उन नर औतार लिया न लिया।।

-- तुलसी साहिब की शब्दावली भाग-1 (पृ० 2)

It is immaterial whether or not a person has been born into this world, if he does not contemplate upon the form of his Master.

Without beholding the Resplendent Form of the Master within, one can never purify the mind. So long as the Radiant Form does not manifest, we remain ignorant of Gurmat and consequently of the higher planes of true spirituality.

Hafiz says,

दिलम बे–जमानत सफ़ाए नदारद, चू बेगानाए क–आशनाए नदारद।

-- दीवाने-हाफ़िज़ (पृ० 162)

Such inner contemplation is a gift from the Master. But it is obtained only when the Lord wills it. The outer learning and contemplation do not lead to God-Realization with the consequence that the soul continues to be tied to this world.

The Sikh Scriptures detail a number of the advantages that accrue from contemplation upon the form of the Master, who is God Incarnate. By such contemplation, one is freed from the shackles of this world. Then sin, misery and fear vanish, and one imbibes purity. The angels of death have nothing to do with such a one, for he attains equanimity and bliss, and gains his real Home. He is given honour and glory in the Court of the Lord. The Light merges in its Source. As a consequence, he has everlasting happiness, true knowledge and Naam. All desires are fulfilled. All impurities are removed. The soul transcends the world of phenomena and wins name and fame, both in this world and the next. m



SOUND OR MELODY (*Dhun* धुन)

When the first two methods of spiritual practice, viz., Simran सिमरन and Dhyan ध्यान, are completed, they lead to the third one which is Dhun धुन.

Simran is complete, only when contemplation has been achieved. When Dhyan is complete, Dhun is awakened automatically. This is known as Bhajan भजन in the language of the Saints.

Bhajan simply means listening to the Sound Current, which is also termed by the Saints as the practice of Surat-Shabd Yoga सुरत–शब्द योग. This is done by the soul, or by its attention. It is through Surat सुरत or soul that the Divine Melody is heard. The practice awakens the soul, that has been slumbering for ages and results in a state of bliss.

Bhajan does not cause fatigue nor involve physical labour. It is Anand-Marg आनन्द मार्ग or the Path of Bliss. It is also called the Path of Surat-Shabd Yoga. It is superior to both Simran and Dhyan Yoga. In Simran, we have to remember God. In Dhyan, we have to contemplate upon the physical, the Radiant and the Shabd Form of the Master. By these two means, one contacts the Sound Current.

Yogas are of many kinds: Prana Yoga प्राण–योग is the practice of breath control; Hatha Yoga हठ–योग consists of physical postures. Both of these concern the gross or physical body and are of low merit. Those that pertain to mind and intellect, concern the astral body. Anand Yoga आनन्द योग pertains to the causal body. This is superior to all other Yogas. The path of the Saints is Surat-Shabd Yoga, which is the life-breath of all Yogas. No outer practice is involved in it. The Sound Current is heard with the ears of the soul. We gain this exalted state

without expenditure of any kind. The Sound is really the manifestation of the Lord. It comes from the highest region and the soul is connected with it.

Surat सुरत (soul) and Shabd शब्द (Sound) are both of the essence of the Lord. God Himself is Shabd, as well as Surat. They are an inseparable triune or three-in-one. The Sound is in reality God-in-Action. He projects Himself into everything and revels in this play. He is the worshiper, as well as the worshiped. Naam नाम, Sound शब्द or Bani बानी are attributes of the Lord. All religious Scriptures bear this out.

हरि आपे सबदु सुरति धुनि आपे।। हरि आपे वेखै विगसै आपे।।
हरि आपि जपाइ आपे हरि जापे।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी गुआरेरी म० 4, पृ० 165)

The Lord Himself is the Word or the Shabd. He Himself is the awareness, attuned to its music. The Lord Himself beholds, and He Himself blossoms forth. The Lord Himself chants, and the Lord Himself inspires others to chant.

In the Sikh Scriptures, the Sound Current is known as the Pure Sound, Truth, or All-pervading Naam, which can be heard only by attaining to the highest state of consciousness.

The Shabd is really the Music of the Lord, and it is listening to it that is greatly stressed in the Scriptures. It is the method of singing the glory of the Lord. It is the Unstruck Melody. It is One, and yet it manifests itself in all. The entire universe is sustained by it.

Shabd gives rise to Dhun धुन, which can be felt at the eye centre. This Sound is permanent (unceasing). Nor can it ever be measured in terms of money. Dhun has both Light and Sound. It is the Unstruck Music, Anahad that resounds within. What we hear within is its reverberation, by gaining which the mind becomes still.

अनहद रुण झुणकारु सदा धुनि निरभउ कै घरि वाइदा।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (मारू दखणी म० 1, पृ० 1033)

The sweet, melodious, Unstruck Sound Current vibrates continuously in the home of the fearless Lord.

Dhun is born out of Shabd. It has been called the quintessence of the Unstruck Music अनहत संगीत or Truth सत्.

Dhun is all-pervading and resounds as the music of the been (or pungi, the snale-charmer's pipe) in Sach Khand सच–खंड. The been sound is exceptionally melodious and enrapturing, and appears as the Unstruck Melody. The true Shabd gives rise to the Sahaj state सहज अवस्था, where resounds the Saar Shabd सार–शब्द, by listening to which we merge in the Lord. This is Guru Bani गुरु–बानी, which manifests as heavenly music. Whoever merges himself in it, partakes of the Elixir that issues forth from it.

His mind turns away from worldly pleasures and becomes steeped in joy. He then arrives at the Real Home.

The physical body has nine apertures. The tenth is a secret outlet with a strong door. This door can be opened with the help of Shabd, granted by a Master. Within it, is heard the reverberation of the Divine Music. When this door is opened, one beholds Light within. It is then that one attains the state of true worship.

Dhun comprises Contemplation, Meditation and Knowledge

True knowledge consists of Dhyan and Dhun and their practice; this is an ineffable state.

गिआनु धिआनु धुनि जाणीऐ अकथु कहावै सोइ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सिरीराग म० 1, पृ० 59)

Know that from the vibration of the Word, we obtain spiritual wisdom and concentration.

The Divine Music ever plays; and it is through listening to it that one begins to love the Lord. This is true worship of the Lord, but it can find a place in our hearts, only when the Lord wills it.

It is not possible to obtain this treasure of Dhun by reading Scriptures. The books contain only its description. We may read or hear the four Vedas वेद, the eighteen Puranas पुराण and the six Darshanas षद्दर्शन, but these can never equal the sweet music of God's Name. So long as the soul does not contact the Sound within, it remains bereft of the Reality. It

is like a bird that imitates the songs of others, but does not understand their meaning.

Whence do we Get Dhun?

This Melody ceaselessly resounds in every human being. It emanates from God Himself. It is resounding day and night, but it is God's gift. By obtaining it, the soul merges in the Lord. The music resounds within. It is only a highly-evolved soul, however, who can put us in contact with it. It is through His Grace that one can attain it. But one can acquire Sahaj Dhun सहज धुन only in the company of Saints. When this happens, one is able to merge in the Lotus Feet of the Lord and is freed forever from woe and misery. By steadfast devotion at the Feet of the Master, one attains freedom from the clutches of the Negative Power. Kaal is mighty and powerful. No one can conquer him. Yet even Kaal remains away from Dhun.

अफरिओ जमु मारिआ न जाई।। गुर कै सबदे नेड़ि न आई।।
सबदु सुणे ता दूरहु भागै मतु मारे हरि जीउ वेपरवाहा हे।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (मारू सोलहे म० 3, पृ० 1054)

The invulnerable Messenger of Death cannot be killed. The Guru's Word or the Shabd prevents him from approaching. When he hears the Shabd, he runs far away. He is afraid that the self-sufficient Dear Lord will kill him.

The inner Melody is resounding ceaselessly. It is eternal. But in spite of its ringing, day and night, in everybody, we remain poor. We are deprived of this treasure. It lies latent in us, but we quit the scene of life, without ever awakening to it. We never care to dig for the treasure. It is only when we meet a Master and follow his instructions, that we become aware of it and open the knot of the material and the conscious.

The Dhun is wide-awake within. Together with it, there is Light. Those persons, who may have acquired powers to perform miracles, although they may sit long in meditation, remain unaware of it. They assert that there is only 'silence' within and nothing else. If they were to contact a genuine

Adept, they would realize both Light and Sound within, and would then be free of doubts, suspicions and dissensions. The Sahaj Dhun does not reveal itself automatically. It comes about only through Simran and Dhyan. On its manifestation, one gains salvation. This is the real 'Arati आरती' that continues without ceasing. It ends only at the time of death. In the Sikh Scriptures, it has been termed 'Kirtan कीर्तन'. This true worship, in which resounds the Divine Music, is realized through a Master, who has himself conquered death.

The real adoration of the soul is the Katha कथा, Kirtan कीर्तन, Raag राग, Naad नाद or Dhun धुन, which pleases God. When this is heard the devotees' desires are fulfilled.

Where can we get this Dhun? God is our real Lord. In His Court resounds the Divine Melody. When a devotee is able to still his wandering mind, and with the help of a Master, gains access to Daswan Dwar दसवाँ द्वार (the Tenth Door), there he drinks Amrit अमृत, the Elixir of Life. It is at this place that the Master showers Ambrosia and the Sound Current resounds. Sahaj-Dhun सहज धुन then manifests in the body. By listening to it, one subdues the mind, and the temple of the body becomes sublime.

The Shabd in this temple has five resonances. These are the guide-posts for our journey home wards. Therefore, this Dhun is also called the five Sounds or Panch Shabds पंच–शब्द.

अनदिनु मेलु भइआ मनु मानिआ घर मंदर सोहाए।।
पंच सबद धुनि अनहद वाजे हम घरि साजन आए।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सूही म० 1, पृ० 764)

Meeting with my friends, night and day, my mind is pleased; my home and mansion are beautified The Unstruck Sound Current of the Panch Shabd, the Five Primal Sounds, vibrates and resounds; my friends have come into my home.

When the soul currents rise up, after leaving the six chakras षट्–चक्र (body centres), the Dhun manifests itself. The Dhun emanates from the Lord's Home and reverberates in all of us in the forehead, between the two eyebrows.

Who is Eligible for Dhun?

To obtain Dhun, it is essential for one to be the disciple of a Perfect Master. Dhun manifests itself only in the devotee of a Master. It appears. only when the course of Contemplation is completed. When the devotee attunes to Dhun, he realizes the inexpressible Truth.

धुनि महि धिआनु धिआन महि जानिआ गुरमुखि अकथ कहानी।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (रामकली म० 1, पृ० 879)

The meditation is in the music, and knowledge is in meditation. Become Gurumukh, and speak the Unspoken Speech.

Shabd is a Royal Road to God-realization. It is by traversing this road, that the devotee reaches the Court of the Lord, which is Sach Khand. There he meets with no obstacles. He constantly dwells upon Naam, and remains steeped in it. Both the Negative Power and Maya remain away from Dhun and do not cross the path of a devotee.

Fruits of Dhun

Mind is not amenable to control, even though millions of ordinary methods may be tried. Yogis of the past tried all their techniques and failed; the intellectuals gained nothing from philosophical discussions and critical commentaries; the efforts of anchorites performing penances and austerities proved abortive; the learned use all their knowledge, but with intellect and cleverness alone, they failed to subdue the mind. The only remedy for controlling the mind is to listen to the Sound Current. No second way exists.

धुनि वाजे अनहद घोरा।। मनु मानिआ हरि रसि मोरा।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (रामकली म० 1, पृ० 879)

The Unstruck Melody of the Sound Current resonates and resounds; my mind is appeased by the subtle essence of the Lord.

When the mind listens to the Shabd Dhun, it is completely enraptured by the bliss that Dhun confers. One who has joined his consciousness with Dhun goes beyond the reach of Kaal, the Negative Power, and thus ends the ages-long cycle of birth and rebirth. The mind becomes still after hear-

ing the sweet Melody, with the result that one's ego vanishes and one gains his heart's desire.

The Shabd Dhun permeates all beings, and by listening to it one becomes a Saint, God's Name then dwells in the heart and one is attuned to Him. It is through the aid of Dhun that the Soul merges in the Lord. m

9

DYING WHILE LIVING
(*Jeete-Jee Marna* जीते–जी मरना)

Everyone has to die someday. Whether man or beast, rich or poor, healthy or diseased, nobody escapes death.; all have to pass through its gate. This soul, that has taken the physical form, has to leave it. Everybody knows that he has to quit this world someday, but he knows not when.

Death is real, but life (in this world) is unreal. The Bible says,

Dust thou art, and to dust returns. (Genesis 3:19)

We have never cared to think about what kind of a journey lies beyond the gates of death. We lament the death of others. But actually, we should be concerned with our own end and should prepare ourselves for our own end, and should prepare ourselves for our own life beyond death.

What is death? Do we feel any pain at the time of death? In the Bhagavad there is a statement to the effect that the pain of death is so acute that it is equivalent to being stung simultaneously by a hundred thousand scorpions (the sing of one scorpion is exceedingly painful).

And the Koran says,

The pain of death may be likened to a thorny shrub passed into the body.

In the Sikh Scriptures also, there are various references to the pain of death.

जिंदु निमाणी कढीऐ हडा कू कड़काइ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सलोक सेख फरीद, पृ० 1377)

The Messenger of Death breaks the bones of the body and pulls the helpless soul out.

What kind of country do we have to pass through after death? Whom are we to deal with? We must ponder over

these questions. The Scriptures make occasional mention of this subject, but we pay little heed to them, for we always believe them to be either fantasies or fairy tales, or efforts to wean people away from sin, or to induce them to perform good deeds. We have to cross the gates of death. No one can be an exception to this. Saint Paul says,

Death is the last enemy to be conquered. We should not shut our eyes to this subject. (Bible, I Corinthians 15:26)

It is our common experience that whenever we have to go to another country, we make preparations for it and carry with us the necessary funds. We make arrangements for the means of transport, be it an automobile, a horse-drawn carriage or a railway train. We write a letter to a friend in that country, and also decide about where to stay. We are so careful in these worldly matters that we never undertake a journey, without making adequate arrangements. When we have to go to a new country, we even provide for a guide to accompany us. Yet for the journey after death, which hangs over our heads like the Sword of Damocles, and which we all must undertake in due course, we care very little. Have we arranged for food, which is Naam नाम or Shabd शब्द, for this journey? Have we decided upon a guide, or a Master (Guru), who has personal knowledge and experiences to accompany us? Have we ever thought of the place, where we are to stay? Leaving aside these matters, we are even completely ignorant of our destination and of the person who can help us to get there. Nay, we have even forgotten death.

We are very clever about our worldly affairs and always make appropriate arrangements for their successful prosecution. But with regard to death, which has no time fixed for it and may come at any time – in childhood, in youth, or in old age – we have never given a moment's thought.

A Master alone knows everything about death. At the time of death, when family and children, our wealth, possessions and body, all leave us, it is the Perfect Master alone who accompanies the disciple. For this reason He is our only true and genuine friend.

The Perfect Master is a true guide in the astral, causal and the higher purely Spiritual regions. That is why the Scriptures have strongly emphasized the need for us to meet such Masters and to keep constantly dwelling upon them in our mind. In this way alone, can we strike at the very root of transmigration and achieve everlasting bliss.

The Saints have solved the mystery of death. They leave the human body every day and travel into the Astral and Causal regions. In their company, we learn the means by which, we too can triumph over death.

Death is not to be feared. It is only the name given to the phenomenon of the soul leaving the body. After discarding the physical body, the soul ascends to the Astral, Causal, and higher regions. In Persian, this phenomenon is called "Intaqal", which means to undergo change. It is merely the withdrawal of the soul from the gross senses, and its entrance into finer regions. It is merely giving up the present garment, namely, the body. It does not mean annihilation. There is life after death, although we may not be able to see it. All Saints accept this principle.

What Happens at the Time of Death and After?

To solve this riddle, people have spared no efforts. The intellect fails. The learned and the illiterate are equally helpless in resolving this mystery. The reason is that no one has returned after death, to relate to us his knowledge. Again and again, the thought crosses our mind, how satisfying it would be if someone had gone to the regions beyond death and had returned to narrate his actual experiences! We merely make guesses, but with no success. No telescope is able to see the regions beyond death, nor are they accessible to the airplane. These instruments and machines can merely tell us a little about the material regions. They are of no value where the higher regions are concerned.

This subject has been dealt with at length by the Saints. They have described the method of passing through the

Gate of Death, and of conquering death. By following this method, a devotee can also pass through the Gate of Death and travel through the regions beyond it. He leaves and returns to his physical body at will. While doing this, he is completely conscious, and whatever scenes he witnesses he vividly remembers.

Plutarch described the state at the time of death as follows:

> *At the moment of death, the soul experiences the same impressions and passes through the same processes as are experienced by those who are initiated into the Great Mysteries.*

Those who follow the instructions of a True Master die daily – while living. They go into the regions above, and they come back into the same physical body at will.

By Simran all the active energy in the body is concentrated at the eye centre; by Contemplation it is fixed there; and by means of the Sound Current it ascends to higher regions. When consciousness separates from the body, it is known as dying while living. The practitioner leaves his body in the same way, that the soul leaves it at the time of death. The difference is only this – that his connection with the physical body is not completely broken. There is a silver cord, referred to in the Bible, by means of which, one can leave the body and return to it at will and be at all times connected with the body. In this manner, he gets an insight into death while living.

> *Remember Him before the Silver Cord is broken and the Golden Bowl is crushed, the Pitcher by the Well is shattered and the Wheel at the Cistern is crushed. (Bible, Eccl. 12:6)*

He travels in the Astral, the Causal and the higher regions, and becomes fully familiar with them. He is able to meet and talk with the inhabitants of these regions.

One of the benefits of the teachings of the Saints is that a disciple crosses the Gate of Death in a state of happiness and thus conquers it. This is the experience of all disciples, who have been blessed with the Grace of the Master. It is not merely talk or a fable taken from some book of Holy

scriptures. People in general, whether literate or illiterate, believe that no one knows what lies beyond death and that no one has ever returned. They are afraid of the very name of death, for they know nothing about it nor as to how it comes about.

But the Saints teach us how to go beyond death, even while living. Whoever desires to learn this, from them can easily do so and thus be free of ignorance. Death has no fear for a follower of the Path of the Saints. If one learns the art of dying while living, he can forever end the cycle of birth and rebirth. He loses all fear of death, for every day, he crosses its gate. Therefore, Saints eulogize the state of dying while living, and teach the manner of doing it. Death is sweet, if a person can die while living.

Dadu says,

दादू पहिली मरि रहै, पाछे तै सब कोइ ।।

-- दादू दयाल की बानी भाग-1 (जीवत मृतक को अंग 23)

O Dadu learn to die first, for everyone has to die soon or later.

The Koran also enjoins,

मूतू–क़िबलान तू मौतू

One should die before his death.

-- कुरान मजीद

This does not mean that one should commit suicide. After death, every soul has to go helplessly to the astral and higher regions. But the scriptures enjoin:

Where you have to go after death, go there by dying while living. Practice such a yoga as will take you to the regions above during your sojourn in this world.

Saints die while living, many times a day at will, and traverse the upper realms. They sever their connections with the physical world during their spiritual practice, and then return to the world. They have no difficulty in doing this.

Dying while living is not accomplished easily. The method can be gained only through the Grace of a Master. Only that person can die while living, who has subdued his mind and curbed his desires and cravings, and has annihilated his ego. This is not as simple as it may seem. It is

not as easy to do, as it is to talk about. One achieves it by renouncing all desires for the world. So long as desires assail the body, the soul cannot succeed in leaving it. It is only by detaching oneself from the body and mind, that one can die while living. When, for the first time, the soul leaves the pot of clay (body) during practice, it has to pass through the Gate of Death. Giving up the world and its desires and surrendering completely to the ever-helpful Master, let your soul rise to higher regions. You will experience no trouble.

The body is an Ocean of Spirituality which none can fathom. Only one who dies while living can obtain pearls of super-consciousness from it. Such a one, if he enters the ocean of his own body even once, can recover a treasure of super-consciousness from it. Otherwise, the treasure remains completely hidden. One who dives deep in the ocean and rises up into the sky will make the higher regions his abode and will realize the jewel of the Lord (Hari हरि). So long as we yearn for life (in this world), we can never obtain this precious Jewel. It is through the Grace of the Lord, that a rare devotee, who dies while living can find this Jewel. If you wish to realize God, you must die while living, for it is impossible to attain Him so long as you do not die. So long as you cherish worldly desires, God-realization will not come to you.

A person, who dies while living, lives forever. One who looks upon life in this world and death with the same attitude, is also free from death. This dying while living has nothing to do with being cremated or buried. It is a state or condition, in which the Master bestows eternal life on his disciples.

Maulana Rumi says,

नै चुनां मर्गे किह् दर गूरे रवी, बल्कि अज़ जुल्मत सुए नूरे रवी।
नै चुनां मर्गे किह् दर गूरे रवी, मर्ग–तब्दीली किह् दर नूरे शवी।

-- मसनवी मौलाना रूमी (दफ़्तर 6, पृ० 86)

It is not death that will take you, it is a tomb that will. Death is a change that will usher you into light from darkness, and bestow Eternal Bliss upon you.

आँ तूइ किह् बेबदन दारी बदन, पस मतर्स अज़ जिस्मो जाँ बेरूँ शुदन।

-- मसनवी मौलाना रूमी (दफ़्तर 3, पृ० 161)

You need have no fear of death, for apart from the physical body you have other bodies. Therefore, do not be afraid to come out of this body.

We can never realize true life, so long as we do not go beyond the domain of death or, in other words, so long as we are not born into the subtle higher regions.

Christ says,

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. (John 3:3)

Hakim Sa'nai says,

बमीर ऐ दोस्त पेश अज़ मर्ग, अगर मी ज़िंदगी ख़्वाही।

-- दीवाने-सनाई (पृ० 27)

O friend! If you wish to attain Life Eternal, then die before death overtakes you.

Bu-Ali Shah Qalandar says,

पेशे–मुर्दन मीर ऐ नेको सीअर, जां बजानां दिह ज़ि जाने–ख़ुद गुज़र।

-- मसनवी बू-अली शाह क़लन्दर (पृ० 41)

O good-natured friend! Die before death overtakes you, surrender your life to the Lord, and thus walk away from this life.

ता नमीरी सूद कै ख़्वाही रबूद, रौ बमीरो बहरा बरदार अज़ वुजूद।

-- मसनवी मौलाना रूमी (दफ़्तर 3, पृ० 363)

So long as you do not die while living, how can you ever get the fruit of Life? Therefore, die while living and avail yourself of the value of this human life.

Maulana Rumi further says,

O man, you have died a number of times, but have remained covered with veils, for you have failed to realize the secret of real death.

Kabir says,

मरते मरते जग मुआ, औसर मुआ न कोय।
दास कबीरा यों मुआ, बहुरि न मरना होय।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह-2 (जीवत मृतक का अंग 16, पृ० 123)

The whole world keeps dying after death, for no one dies the real death. I have died a death that will make me never die again. So

long as you do not know how to die while living, you will not gain freedom from the cycle of birth and death.

You cannot reach the top of a house, unless you ascend all the steps of a ladder. If there were a hundred steps and a person should climb only ninety-eight, he would still remain ignorant about the housetop. If a well were a hundred feet deep and a person had ninety-nine feet of rope, he would fail to fill his vessel with water. In the same way, so long as the soul does not go completely beyond the domain of the body and the senses, it can never know the scenes of the upper realms.

Hafiz also says,

तू कज़ सराए तबीयत नमे रवी बेरूं,
कुज़ा बकूए–हक़ीक़त गुज़र तवानी करद।

-- दीवाने-हाफ़िज़ (पृ० 122)

O man! So long as you do not go out of the body, how can you ever tread the path of Spirituality?

Only those persons, who die while living, can taste the fruits. Therefore, so long as the soul does not leave the body completely during one's lifetime, births and deaths will continue.

When the soul ascends within, it comes across the galaxy of stars. So long as the soul does not cross this region, it is not able to behold the sun and the moon, nor the Radiant Form of the Master. O wise man! So long as the veil of the body does not vanish, the Radiant Form of the Master does not manifest. Therefore, make a real death your own and remove this veil of the body. O man! living in the Will of God (Gurumukh)! the Master confers this death upon you to enable you to live eternally. So long as you remain alive on this earth, you should be able to leave your body at will and traverse the higher regions. The spiritual regions are the abode of your soul. If a person dies such a death, his soul need not return to this world any more.

Maulana Rumi says,

अर्श अस्त नशेमन–तू शर्मत बादा, काही ओ मुक़ीमे–ख़ते–ख़ाक शवी।

-- मौलाना रूमी

O soul! Your abode is in heaven. You are an inhabitant of that place. Unfortunately, you have become prisoner in this pot of clay.

Swami Ji Maharaj also affirms:

तेरा नाम अधर है प्यारी तू घर संग बंधानी।

-- सार-बचन छंद बंद (20:19:7, पृ० 165)

Your abode is there, where the physical body does not exist. Why are you then tied down to this physical body?

A person whose soul has traversed the upper realms, before death has overtaken him, can alone understand what it is to die while living. Intellect is helpless to comprehend this phenomenon.

The chief essential in Spirituality is to die while living, because it is after such a death, that the soul becomes really alive. Most people in the world are ignorant of this true path, for they are afraid to die while living.

Where can we find this true spiritual knowledge? We can do so by transcending our intellectual knowledge. The Real Being can be found only by going above the physical being. Self-realization can come only by transcending the physical self. So long as you do not die a real death, how can you gain these benefits? Therefore, O man! Go and die this true death, so you will fulfil the real purpose of human life. O ignorant man! So long as you do not die this true death, never will you be able to stand in God's presence.

This is the real secret of dying before death. Only by dying such a death, does one become eligible for the Grace of God. There is no other method, by which one can be accepted in the Court of the Lord.

Remember that the gracious look of the Master is better than a thousand efforts. It is highly rewarding, for it pulls the soul out of the nine portals and collects it at the Tenth Gate. Our own sharpness, cleverness and effort are not fully beneficial, for thereby, one may be led astray and have to face numerous privations. The Grace of the Master, one can gain by dying while living. In other words, it is obtained by making the soul currents leave the body and concentrate at

the Third Eye. It is only the dauntless disciple, who has full faith in the Master, who realizes this Grace. It is the Grace, that brings about devotion; and it is devotion, that entitles one to His Grace. Both go hand in hand.

But such a death, namely, dying while living, can be had only through the Grace of the Master. There is no other way. The lovers of the Lord, by dying while living, ever drink the wine of happiness and bliss. This is the privilege of those, to whom the Master Himself offers the 'Wine'.

Shams-i-Tabriz says,

आख़िर चिह् बाशद गर शबे अज़ जां बरआरी या रबे,
बेरूं जही गोरे तन आंदर रवी दर साख़्ते।
अज़ जां बरआरी यकसरे एमन लि़ शमशीरे–अज़ल,
बागे दर आई कंदरु नबुवद ख़िजां रा ग़ारते।

-- कुल्लियाते-शम्स तब्रेज़ (पृ० 871)

How wonderful it would be if you should take your soul out of the body some night, and rise above to higher realms after leaving the 'tomb' of your body. If your soul should do this, you would forever escape death's sword. You would enter a garden that knows no autumn.

The natural death can relieve us from the worries of the world; but if we die while living, we are rid of the sufferings of all the regions and end the cycle of birth and death. It is for this reason that Maulana Rumi boldly asserts:

ख़ेज़ बाला शां बिया पेश अज़ अजल, दर निगर शाही ओ मुल्के–बे–ख़लल।

-- मौलाना रूमी

O Soul! Wake up, rise above before death overtakes you; and behold the kingdom of everlasting peace and bliss.

What really is this dying while living? The headquarters of the soul in the body is at the eye centre, and from here, the entire body receives its energy currents. In the practice of dying while living, there is no need to stop breathing. Simply collect your full attention at the eye centre by doing Simran, thus depriving the senses of their motive energy. The body will then appear as a corpse. In other words, the gross senses should cease to function and the fine ones get awakened,

so that the soul can rise to subtle regions and behold their glory.

The soul cannot behold the spiritual regions with the physical eyes, nor can it hear the Divine Music with the physical ears. There, the feet do not carry one, nor are the hands of any help. Even the tongue can give no aid.

Guru Angad gives a description of the condition of dying while living. He says,

अखी बाझहु वेखणा विणु कंना सुनणा।।
पैरा बाझहु चलणा विणु हथा करणा।।
जीभै बाझहु बोलणा इउ जीवत मरणा।।
नानक हुकमु पछाणि कै तउ खसमै मिलणा।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सलोक म० 2, पृ० 139)

To see without eyes; to hear without ears, to walk without feet, to work without hands; to speak without a tongue-like this, one remains dead while yet alive. O Nanak, recognize the Hukum (Will) of the Lord and merge with your Lord and Master.

Tulsi Das also affirms this condition.

बिनु पद चलइ सुनइ बिनु काना। कर बिनु करम करइ बिधि नाना।।

-- श्रीरामचरितमानस (1:117:3)

He walks without feet, hears without ears and performs actions of various kinds even without hands.

There are many methods by which the soul can be concentrated at its headquarters, that is, by which one can die while living. But the method of Simran सिमरन, Dhyan ध्यान and Dhun धुन is the easiest and best means of achieving this state without difficulty.

By Simran and Dhyan, the soul collects and enters the Tenth Gate. By listening to the Shabd Dhun, it comes out, drawn upwards by the Shabd's magnetic force. Without these practices, it is impossible to leave this pot of clay. No other method exists. Guru Amardas says,

गुर कै सबदि जीवितु मरै गुरमुखि भवजलु तरणा।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सिरीराग म० 3, पृ० 69)

Through the Guru's Shabd, the Gurumukh remains dead, while yet alive, and swims across the terrifying World-Ocean.

Only then does one ferry cross this ocean of phenomena. Swami Ji says in Sar Bachan:

बिन शब्द उपाव न दूजा। काया का छुटे न कूज़ा।।

-- सार-बचन छंद बंद (20:10:2, पृ० 161)

Save Shabd, there is no other way to affect release from birth and death.

Dying with the help of Shabd, one attains everlasting life. A devotee of Shabd never dies a second time.

One, who dies while living, begins to tread the path that is exactly opposite to that of death. He attains the 'Sunn सुन्न' state. He truly drinks nectar and becomes worthy of true devotion. Such a person attains God-realization and is honoured in the Court of the Lord.

The condition of dying while living is the result of the Master's Grace, listening to His Satsang, and devoting oneself to Naam Bhakti नाम भक्ति. It is only then, that one crosses the ocean of life and is acclaimed in the Court of the Lord as having fulfilled the mission of human life.

The disciple or the devotee is the only one, who works for everlasting bliss. In other words, he is the one who practices the Shabd that confers this bliss. Such a one knows both life and death, and treats them alike. Such a one is the beloved of the Lord.

The state of dying while living is the state of separating the conscious from the material. This is a highly evolved state. Such a person knows himself and his mind, and comprehends the mysteries of life. But this state can be achieved only by persons, on whom descends the Grace of the Lord through an Adept. m



COMPANY OF TRUTH
(*Saccha Satsang* सच्चा सत्संग)

These days, Satsang usually means a gathering, where either music and singing, or the recitation of epics and stories, or discussions of spiritual subjects take place. A discourse by a learned person is also referred to as Satsang. When four or more persons sit together and sing the praises of the Lord, with or without the aid of an instrument, even this is known as Satsang.

But in the eyes of the Saints, Satsang connotes a much deeper meaning and has a much higher and purer aim. The gathering of worldly-minded people is not termed Satsang. 'Sat सत्' means Truth, and 'Sang संग' means company. One who has the ideal of Truth established in his heart, is the image of the Lord.

The Hindu Scriptures affirm that one who has the knowledge of Brahm ब्रह्म is himself also Brahm. Similarly, one who has inculcated 'Truth' within himself is himself the Truth. There is no difference between Truth and the True Lord (Sat Purush सत्पुरुष). Satguru सत्गुरु is the light of the Truth.

Different persons exert different kinds of influences. The virtuous create an atmosphere of virtue, while the wicked create an atmosphere of evil.

The mind is a wonderful thing. It takes on the colour of the company it keeps. It imbibes the attributes of what it dwells upon. If it keeps the company of worldly people, it also becomes worldly. On the other hand, if it lives among spiritual people it acquires spiritual tendencies. Therefore, if one is keen to gather spiritual knowledge, he must keep the company of those, who are spiritually advanced and must keep his mind fixed on them.

Where a Satguru resides, the entire environment is spiritualized by his body, mind, intellect and the mode of His life. His very presence greatly influences the people around Him. When a Satguru speaks or makes a movement of the hands or confers a gracious look, a special current of attention emanates from Him and creates a powerful influence on the minds of the audience.

This is subject to the condition that those in the audience are not entirely devoid of loving devotion or, like pieces of flint, are not incapable of understanding or accepting it. Such a current of attention helps the soul to ascend, and the person listening to such spiritual discourses, greatly expands his esoteric knowledge.

We are like children, who are ignorant of Spirituality, and the Satguru is a teacher par excellence of the subject.

मेरे राम हम बारिक हरि प्रभ के है इआणे।।
धनु धनु गुरु गुरु सतिगुरु पाधा जिनि हरि उपदेसु दे कीए सिआणे।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी बैरागनि म० 4, पृ० 168)

O my Lord, we are just the ignorant children of our God. Hail, hail, to the Guru, the Guru, the True Guru, the Divine Teacher who has made me wise through the Lord's Teachings.

The audience, that partakes of the fragrance of the Spirituality of Saints, becomes saturated with its sweet perfume. The greatness of Satsang is unique indeed. All Scriptures and holy books sing its praise. In the Mahabharata the advantages of Satsang are described as follows:

वस्त्रमापस्तिलान्भूमिं गन्धो वासयते यथा।
पुष्पाणामधिवासेन तथा संसर्गजा गुणाः।।
मोहजालस्य योनिहिं मूढ़ैरेव समागमः।
अहन्यहनि धर्मस्य योनिः साधुसमागमः।।
तस्मात्प्राज्ञैश्च वृद्धैश्च सुस्वभावैस्तपस्विभिः।
सद्भिश्च सह संसर्गः कार्यः शमपरायणैः।।

-- महाभारत (3:1:24-26)

Just as fragrant flowers spread their perfume to all things that are nearby, be they earth, water or clothes, even so the company of the virtuous makes people noble. The company of the wicked creates an atmosphere of evil, while that of the Saints enlightens

the soul with Truth and religion. It therefore behooves people to seek the company of the Saints, in order to imbibe the blissful atmosphere that they radiate.

In this connection, Sheikh Sa'di says,

गिले ख़ुशबुए दर हम्माम रोज़े, रसीद अज़ दस्ते–महबूबे बदस्तम।
बदू गुफ़्तम किह् मुश्की या अबीरी, किह् अज़ बूए दिलावेज़े–तू मस्तम।।
बगुफ़्ता मन गिले नाचीज़ बूदम, वलेकिन मुद्दते बा गुल निशस्तम।
जमाले–हमनशींद र मन असर करद, वगरना मन हमां ख़ाकम किह् हस्तम।।

-- शेख़ सा'दी, गुलिस्तान (पृ० 11)

I discovered, one day, scented earth in my bathroom. I asked it whether it was musk or amber, for I was completely fascinated by it. The earth replied: "I once was merely earth, but because of my association with flowers every particle of my substance has been saturated with their fragrance and I have become scented. Without this association, I would have remained the same earth." Therefore, O heart, sit for a moment in the company of the wise, with faith and purity of mind, or take to the association of a highly spiritualized soul in utter humility. If, however, you fail to find such company, do not waste your time, but sit alone in meditation on the Lord. (Gulistan)

We should so mould our lives that all our actions, namely, seeing, hearing, talking, eating, drinking, reading, writing, working and meeting with people, should ensure our progress. The company of evil people produces in us 'rajasik राजसिक' and 'tamasik तामसिक' tendencies, while the company of good and spiritual people engenders in us the 'sattvik सात्त्विक' tendencies, that lead to spiritual awakening.

The following advantages accrue from Satsang:

- By listening to God's Name and His attributes, one gains happiness and longs for union with Him.

- By thinking of the Lord and reciting His Name, one begins to lose worldly attachments, gives up desires and sense pleasures, and earnestly longs for meeting the Lord.

- Our mind is rid of lust and anger, and we become fearless.

- Our mind is filled with the love of the Lord and His creation. In the company of the Saints, none remains alien to us, none is our enemy. We become one with the universe.

- By constant devotion and practice we become worthy of union with the Lord, and begin to perceive His presence everywhere – both within and without.

- An ocean of happiness, bliss and love wells up in our hearts.

- By crossing the three gunas (qualities) and Turiya Pad तुरीय पद, we attain Sahaj सहज and thus reach the highest spiritual abode.

- In the end, we merge into the Lord.

Through Satsang a person becomes free from the influence of the Negative Power and the evil designs of his mind. Yama यम – the Angel of Death – does not come near him and he is emancipated.

A person, who keeps the company of Saints, gains his object and is sustained at the time of his death. The company of evil persons leads to ruin. Therefore, we must abjure such company.

कबीर संगति करीऐ साध की अंति करै निरबाहु।।
साकत संगु न कीजीऐ जा ते होइ बिनाहु।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सलोक भगत कबीर, पृ० 1369)

O Kabir, keep the company of Saints in order to obtain succour at the time of death. Shun the company of the wicked, which causes dismay at the end.

One who enjoys the Satsangs of spiritually-advanced souls goes beyond the domain of matter and mind. Whoever attends Satsang, forgets himself. Just as a melon takes on the colour of its neighbour, so does the Satsang – a fountainhead of Spirituality – bestows its benign drops on all who join it, and they become the embodiment of love. Where love abides, there appears a strange and unworldly love-intoxication. Whoever partakes of it, burns away his cares and the dross of his mind, and begins to shine in his pristine glory.

Satsang is a unique boon, which the Master distributes free to both the learned and the ignorant. His overpowering grandeur, His refulgence and magnetic force attract each person according to his merit, with the result that they

become oblivious of the world and its objects, and completely lose track of time and the manner of its passage.

Lord Krishna has described Satsang in the following words in the Bhagavatam:

न रोधयति मां योगो न सांख्यं धर्म एव च।
न स्वाध्यायस्तपस्त्यागो नेष्टापूर्तं न दक्षिणा।।
व्रतानि यंज्ञश्छंदांसि तीर्थानि नियमा यमाः।
यथावरुन्धे सत्संङ्ग सर्वसंङ्गापहो हि माम्।।

-- श्रीमद्भागवतम् (11:12:1-2)

O Udho! Neither yoga nor knowledge nor study of the scriptures; neither austerities nor renunciation nor service to other; nor charity, nor worship, nor recitals nor pilgrimages, nor even suppression of the mind and senses can ever reach me with the ease that Satsang or the company of Saints does, freeing one of worldly influence. (Bhagavatam)

Satsang is so unique, that even God is enamoured of it and it is incumbent on one therefore to try to find a Saint and either attend His Satsang or keep His company. For this alone, can be the means of his salvation. If one obtains the company of a Saint and develops faith in Him, the fulfilment of his life's mission is ensured. So long as one does not find a Perfect Master, one should prepare oneself by leading a chaste life, studying religious books and keeping the company of those, who are spiritually inclined. But if by the Grace of God, one is able to find a Saint, who has attained God-realization, one should imbibe His teachings and mould his life accordingly. This is real Satsang.

Sat (Truth) is another name for God. It abides in the Saints and their gatherings. In communities, where persons who profess a particular faith live together, there are institutions for imparting their faith. As it is true that education can be had only in schools and colleges, that medicines can be procured only in hospitals, that heat is associated with ovens, and that moisture is inseparable from water, so also God resides, where His devotees live.

Christ also said,

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. (St. Matthew 18:20)

There rise the waves of love and devotion. There bliss and grace confer peace upon all. The world is a furnace ablaze, where all creatures suffer torture. Their pitiable condition is deserving of mercy. The Satsang of Saints is a priceless blessing, and is the heaven of the agonized. Those who depend on it with all their being, cross the ocean of the world and realize Naam.

If the waters of rivers and rivulets, on joining the Ganges, lose their own identity; if the knife of the butcher turns into gold on touching the philosopher's stone; if a margosa tree, growing near a sandalwood tree, imbibes its fragrance; if it is true that whatever is kept in a salt mine, becomes salt; then there need be no doubt that whoever goes to Satsang is dyed in its colour. You may be good or bad; there is nothing to worry about. You should gain the company of a Saint and listen to His Satsang. The fresh air of His invigorating Spirituality will bestow upon you the same spiritual health and freshness, and in a short time, you will become good yourself. Then the qualities of virtue will manifest themselves within you. Listening to the Satsang with your mind and heart, and relishing it, you will easily gain control over your sense, and your soul will become steady in the company of Saints and Sadhus.

Maulana Rumi says,

हेच नकुशद नफ़्स रा जुज़ ज़िल्ले पीर।

-- मसनवी मौलाना रूमी (दफ़्तर २ए पृ० 242)

The desires of the mind will never die without the perfecting hands of the Master.

Tulsi Sahib, the Saint of Hathras, says,

सूरत साधू संग ठहिराई। तब मन थिरता सूरत पाई।।

-- तुलसी साहिब

The soul can be steadied only in the company of a Saint. When this happens, the mind becomes motionless. There is no other method for controlling the mind.

By drinking the drops of nectar that flow from Satsang, you will become an innocent child of Spirituality.

Bhai Gur Das says,

गुरुसिख साधु संग रंग मै रंगीले भए, बारुनी बिगंध गंग संग मिले गंग है।।
सुरसरि संगम ह्वै प्रबल प्रवाहि लिव, सागर अथाह सत्गुरु संग संग है।।

A disciple becomes a Saint in the company of Saints, just as dirty water thrown into the Ganges loses its identity and becomes the same as the water of the Ganges. A river flows into the ocean and becomes the fathomless ocean itself. Similarly, the ocean-like company of a Saint makes His disciples become like Him.

Again, Bhai Gur Das says,

चरन कमल मकरंद निहचल चित्त, दरसन सोभा निधि लहर तरंग है।।
अनहद् सबद कै सरब निधान दान, ज्ञान अंस हंस गति सुमति सबंर्ग है।।
-- भाई गुरदास (कबित्त सवैये, 88)

Just as the sweet fragrance of flowers gives serenity and peace to the mind, similarly the sight or Darshan of a Saint brings peace and calmness. Just as the Anahad Shabd is the bestower of all gifts, similarly the company of the virtuous transforms even a man of utter ignorance into one of high spiritual consciousness.

A Dhaak tree growing in the vicinity of a sandalwood tree takes on the fragrance of sandalwood. The effect of association is indeed great. The tree that grows near a sandalwood tree is indeed fortunate. In all the four castes and the four religious orders, no matter how greatly a person has fallen, he will give up his bad habits and tendencies and imbibe the hue of Satsang. By repairing to Satsang, the lowly gain high status. Just as iron becomes gold on coming in contact with the Philosopher's Stone, so does a person gain in value and honour by coming in contact with a Saint.

The ever-merciful Lord abides within. Through following the precepts of the Master, we are released from the cycle of birth and rebirth. Such is the greatness of Satsang that, like the philosopher's stone, it transforms the iron-like sinner into a gold-like being of virtue. The lowly is raised on high. One who is worthless becomes precious.

Go to Satsang and lovingly contemplate upon the Master and the Lord. Your thoughts, words and deeds will automatically become pure. You will find that through Satsang, the spiritual wealth that can be obtained as a result

of following the various kinds of yoga will come your way, without any difficulty or effort on your part.

Those who attend Satsang automatically listen, ponder over, and visualize the form of the Satguru who is giving the discourse. They do not need to read any outside books, because Satsang deals with them in a practical way. It is not the books alone that are medium for attaining knowledge. Knowledge can be gained by listening to Satsang.

Look at a blind man. By listening alone he has become learned. By intently listening, we can imbibe new knowledge. When a particular subject is discussed in Satsang, all the listeners think of the same subject simultaneously, with the result that the entire environment is saturated with the thought-currents. The entire audience benefits thereby, and the subject leaves an indelible impression on the minds of those present.

Together with the thought-currents, the waves of spirituality that emanate from the Master during His discourse, help to make the subject matter clear so that everyone can comprehend it thoroughly. In this way, the dirt of evil thoughts gets washed away, the gloom of ignorance vanishes, and in its place, emerges the light of knowledge.

If a person is able to attend the Satsang of a Master with attention, steadfastness and faith, the filth of his mind is easily washed away and he becomes capable of increasing faith and understanding.

So long as the mirror of one's mind is not cleansed, the words of the Master do not have their full effect. As the purity of mind increases, the words of the Satguru begin to have a more penetrating effect within. By listening to His words, one becomes absorbed in them, so much so, that he even beholds glimpses of the Master's radiance within. It appears as if there were two bodies, but only one breath. The vision of the same Light enlivening both comes into view. A melon takes colour from another melon. Likewise, one who attends Satsang begins to assume the form of the Master. When this

is accomplished, no lack of anything remains. Whatever wealth of goodness one has gathered, it is entirely the fruit of the company of the virtuous. Satsang is a very powerful means, and through it, one rapidly gains emancipation.

'Sat' also means life. The company of a living person is Satsang. The Scriptures point out that wherever there is a Master, there is Satsang. Satsang is dependent upon a Master, and it can be had only through Him.

By remaining in the company of a spiritually awakened soul, one is virtually reborn. The animal life in him comes to an end, and he begins to realize his spiritual kinship with God. He becomes karmaless (actionless), and the dross of evil wears away. A person, who boards the ship of Naam, easily crosses the ocean of phenomena.

Even as iron floats, when it is in association with wood, so also, by keeping the company of Saints, one is automatically filled with the remembrance of the Lord and develops an intense yearning to realize Him. In Satsang, the Master, through His spiritual currents, bestows the gift of new life on the devotees, with the result that like moths, they sacrifice themselves on the Fountainhead of Light and become one with it. For then, their life does not remain their own. It becomes that of the Master. Thus, they attain the state of completely merging in the Master.

Kabir says,

जब मैं था तब गुरु नहीं, अब गुरु है हम नाहिं।
प्रेम गली अति साँकरी, ता में दो न समाहिं।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (प्रेम का अंग 10, पृ० 46)

When I was, He was not. When He is, I am not. The lane of love is so narrow that it can hold one, but not both.

There is no Satsang worthy of the name, without a Master, because the Satguru is the bestower of Shabd, and without Shabd, nobody can cross the ocean of life. While eulogizing Satsang, the scriptures hold that, that alone is Satsang where Naam alone is exalted and discussed. Such a Satsang can be obtained only from a Master. By devoting oneself

wholly to the Master with mind and body, and completely surrendering to the Will of the Master, one can easily realize Naam and merge in it.

By touching the Philosopher's Stone, iron turns into gold. It gains in value, but it does not become a Philosopher's Stone. How can one adequately exalt Satsang? Whoever abides by Satsang, becomes a Saint. Joining Naam, one merges in it and gains life everlasting. Then is one forever freed from the treadmill of life and death.

There is no Satsang without true Saints and Sages, but it is hard to recognize them. The only touchstone we have is our limited intellect, and it is dyed in the dye of the world and is filled with the poison of sense pleasures. This touchstone is incapable of assaying the transcendental Lord who is free of all worldly blemishes. Although Saints are innocent of all evil, still, we cannot comprehend their eminence, bereft as our intellect is of love and faith. We often attribute things to them, that have no basis whatever in reality.

Saints display no signboards, by which they may be known. In the world we have many persons who are not Saints, but who go about ostentatiously with an air of saintliness about them. On the other hand, a real Saint leads an ordinary life and does not reveal Himself to others. We can recognize Saints only when, through their Grace, they reveal themselves.

How can a blind man ever recognize anyone by means of his eyes? Our inner vision is shut. So long as it does not open, we cannot perceive the glory of the Saints. Lack of faith and perseverance stand in our way. Short of faith, we test them with our imperfect touchstone and fail to recognize True Saints. There is many a Saint. who keeps concealed so carefully that it is very difficult for anyone to detect them. As a consequence, only a few people go to them. At the same time, the world is full of deceit and wickedness. For this reason, the seekers of Truth are enjoined to make their search with care, so that they will not regard each and everyone as a Saint.

The lives of Saints exercise a powerful influence. They possess a magnetic force. Their mind, body and spirit radiate waves of noble and virtuous thoughts. They have complete control over their mind and senses. In their company, our own mind and senses become stable and no longer wander, with the result that we begin to be dyed in the Lord's Grace.

Where we perceive this to be taking place, it is there that a real Saint resides; keep His company. In contrast to this, however noble a bearing a person may have, if in his company evil thoughts continue to exist or increase, or a longing for the remembrance and the love of the Lord does not emerge, it is best to shun his company.

In the Bhagavatam Kapila Rishi, in the form of the Divine, describes to his mother the characteristics of the Saints:

तितिक्षवः करुणिका सुहृदः सर्वदेहिनाम्।
अजातशत्रवः शान्ताः साधवः साधुभूषणाः।।
मय्यनन्येन भवेन भक्तिं कुर्वन्ति ये दृढाम्।
मत्कृते त्यक्तकर्माणस्त्यक्तस्वजनबान्धवाः।।
मदाश्रयाः कथा मृष्टाः शृण्वन्ति कथयन्ति च।
तपन्ति विविधास्तापा नैतान्मद्गत्तचेतसः।।
त एते साधवः साध्वि सर्वसङ्गविवर्जिताः।
सङ्गस्तेष्वथ ते प्रार्थ्यः सङ्गदोषहरा हि ते।।

-- श्रीमद्भागवतम् (3:25:21-24)

Whom poverty does not dismay, nor pleasures make happy; who are models of calmness and mercy, who are the selfless friends of all and regard none as their enemy; whose minds are marked with singleness of purpose; who accepting the Truth about God offer Me loving devotion, renounce the fruits of all their actions for My sake and turn away from their worldly relations; who having complete faith in Me, sing My praises, and have their minds fixed on Me. Such people are free from all worldly ties and do not run after sense pleasures. It is they who are worthy of My association.

Again, he says to Uddhava:

कृपालुरकृतद्रोहस्तितिक्षुः सर्वदेहिनाम्।
सत्यसारोऽनवद्यात्मा समः सर्वोपकारकः।।
कामैरहतधीर्दान्तो मृदुः शुचिरकिञ्चनः।
अनीहो मितभुक् शान्तः स्थिरो मच्छरणो मुनिः।।
अप्रमत्तो गभीरात्मा धृतिमाञ्जितषड्गुणः।
अमानी मानदः कल्पो मैत्रः कारुणिकः कविः।।

-- श्रीमद्भागवतम् (11:11:29-31)

Who is merciful, who is the enemy of none; who is steadfast and true; who is pure of mind and regards all alike; who tries to do good to others; whose mind is rid of desires and cravings; who has control over his senses; who is tender-hearted and of noble and pure character; who is humble and devoid of desires; whose habits are under control; who has a serene and firm mind; who has surrendered himself to Me; who is constantly dwelling upon My transcendental attributes, who has no weaknesses; who is sober and contented, who has conquered hunger and thirst, sorrow and deception, life and death, and the other ills of life, etc.; who does not wish to be venerated by anybody but himself; who respects everybody; who fulfils his obligations and responsibilities; who is a friend of all; who is full of kindness and knowledge; such a person is verily a Saint.

In the Mahabharata, Shanti Parva, Bhrigu Rishi describes to Bharadwaj Rishi the characteristics of those, in whose company one loses the fear of life and death, and gains salvation.

They are vegetarians. They love or hate no one. The virtuous life is dear to them. Their senses are under control. They regard joy and sorrow alike. They are truthful and benevolent. They accept no charity from others, while they are themselves charitably disposed. They serve their guests. They afford comfort to everybody. They help everybody. They are courageous. They follow the path of Truth. They are the friend of all, and in time of need are prepared to sacrifice everything. They remain steadfast on the path of Truth. Their conduct and bearing are in accordance with the tenets of their religion. They talk ill of no Saint nor Seer. They are a menace to none, nor are they frightening. They live a noble life with determination, and bear a feeling of non-vio-

lence towards all. They are free from lust, anger, attachment and ego. They do their duty and follow religion for its own sake, and not for securing fame and wealth. They are naturally inclined towards religion. Just as they have their daily bath, eat their daily food and satisfy other physical needs, so also is religion part and parcel of their daily life. They have no fear, sorrow, or ire. They are truthful and honest. They do not rejoice over gains, nor do they grieve over losses. They are of Satoguna temperament and maintain their equanimity under all conditions. The pairs of opposites such as gain and loss, joy and sorrow, love and hatred, life and death, fail to perturb their mind. They are firm and strong in their resolve. They attain a high stage and tread the path of Truth with great resolution. (Mahabharata, Book 12: Shanti Parva, Chapter 192, Shlokas 1-18)

The Gita also gives the criterion for recognizing the Saints:

अद्वेष्टा सर्वभमूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च।
निर्ममो निरहङ्कारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी।।
सन्तुष्टः सततं योगी यतात्मा दृढ़निष्चयः।
मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः।।
यस्मान्नोद्विजते लोको लोकान्नोद्विजते च यः।
हर्षामर्षभयोद्वेगैर्मुक्तो यः स च मे प्रियः।।
अनपेक्षः शुचिर्दक्ष उदासीनो गतव्यथः।
सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः।।
यो न ह्रष्यिति न द्वेष्टि न शोचति न काङ्क्षति।
शुभाशुभपरित्यागी भक्तिमान्यः स मे प्रियः।।
समः शत्रौ च मित्रे च तथा मानापमानयोः।
शीतोष्णसुखदुःखेषु समः सङ्गविवर्जितः।।
तुल्यनिन्दास्तुतिर्मौनी सन्तुष्टो येन केनचित्।
अनिकेतः स्थिरमतिर्भक्तिमान्मे प्रियो नरः।।
ये तु धर्म्यामृतमिदं यथोक्तं पर्युपासते।
श्रद्दधाना मत्परमा भक्तास्तेऽतीव मे प्रियाः।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (12:13-20)

Those devotees are very dear to Me, who are free from malice toward all living beings, who are friendly, and compassionate. They are free from attachment to possessions and egotism, equipoised in happiness and distress, and ever-forgiving. They are

ever-contented, steadily united with Me in devotion, self-controlled, firm in conviction, and dedicated to Me in mind and intellect.

Those who are not a source of annoyance to anyone and who in turn, are not agitated by anyone, who are equal in pleasure and pain, and free from fear and anxiety, such devotees of Mine are very dear to Me.

Those who are indifferent to worldly gain, externally and internally pure, skillful, without cares, untroubled, and free from selfishness in all undertakings, such devotees of Mine are very dear to Me.

Those who neither rejoice in mundane pleasures nor despair in worldly sorrows, who neither lament for any loss nor hanker for any gain, who renounce both good and evil deeds, such persons who are full of devotion are very dear to Me.

Those, who are alike to friend and foe, equipoised in honour and dishonour, cold and heat, joy and sorrow, and are free from all unfavourable association; those who take praise and reproach alike, who are given to silent contemplation, content with what comes their way, without attachment to the place of residence, whose intellect is firmly fixed in Me, and who are full of devotion to Me, such persons are very dear to Me.

Those who honour this nectar of wisdom declared here, have faith in Me, and are devoted and intent on Me as the supreme goal, they are exceedingly dear to Me.

In the Gita, Krishna also describes them as those who have crossed the three gunas:

प्रकाशं च प्रवृत्तिं च मोहमेव च पाण्डव।
न द्वेष्टि सम्प्रवृत्तानि न निवृत्तानि काङ्क्षति।।
उदासीनवदासीनो गुणैर्यो न विचाल्यते।
गुणा वर्तन्त दत्येव योऽवतिष्ठति नेङ्गते।।
समदुःखसुखः स्वस्थः समलोष्टाश्मकाञ्चन।
तुल्यप्रियाप्रियो धीरस्तुल्यनिन्दात्मसंस्तुति।।
मानापमानयोस्तुल्यस्तुल्यो मित्राारिपक्षयोः।
सर्वारम्भ परित्यागी गुणातीतः स उच्यते।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (14:22-25)

O Arjuna, the persons who are transcendental to the three gunas, neither hate illumination (which is born of sattva), nor activity (which is born of rajas), nor even delusion (which is born of tamas), when these are abundantly present, nor do they long for them when they are absent. They remain neutral to the modes of nature and are not disturbed by them. Knowing it is only the gunas that act, they stay established in the self, without wavering. Those who are alike in happiness and distress; who are established in the self; who look upon a clod, a stone, and a piece of gold as of equal value; who remain the same amidst pleasant and unpleasant events; who are intelligent; who accept both blame and praise with equanimity; who remain the same in honour and dishonour; who treat both friend and foe alike; and who have abandoned all enterprises – they are said to have risen above the three gunas.

In Bhagavatam, describing the attributes of those who have become one with the One Lord, their characteristics are described:

अथ भागवतं ब्रूत यद्धर्मो यादृशो नृणाम्।
यथा चरति यद् ब्रूते यैर्लिङ्गैर्भवत्प्रियः।।
सर्वभूतेषु यः पश्येद् भगवद्भावमात्मनः।
भूतानि भगवत्यात्मन्येष भागवतोत्तमः।।
ईश्वरे तदधीनेषु बालिशेषु द्विषत्सु च।
प्रेममैत्रीकृपोपेक्षा यः करोति स मध्यमः।।
आर्चायामेव हरये पूजां यः श्रद्धयेहते।
न तद्भक्तेषु चान्येषु स भक्तः प्राकृतः स्मृतः।।
गृहीत्वापीन्द्रियैरर्थान् यो न द्वेष्टि न हृष्यति।
विष्णोर्मायामिदं पश्यन् स वै भागवतोत्तमः।।
देहेन्द्रियप्राणमनोधियां यो जन्माप्ययक्षुद्भयतर्षकृच्छ्रैः।
संसारधर्मैरविमुह्यमानः स्मृत्या हरेर्भागवतप्रधानः।।
न कामकर्मबीजानां यस्य चेतसि सम्भवः।
वासुदेवैकलिनयः स वै भगवतोत्तमः।।
न यस्य जन्मकर्मभ्यां न वर्णाश्रमजातिभिः।
सज्जतेऽस्मिन्नहंभावो देहे वै स हरेः प्रियः।।
न यस्य स्वः परः इति वित्तेष्यात्मनि वा मिदा।
सर्वभूतसमः शान्तः स वै भागवतोत्तमः।।

त्रिभुवनविभवहेतवेऽप्यकुण्ठस्मृतिरजितात्मसुरादिभिर्विमृग्यात्।
न चलति भगवत्पदारविन्दाल्लवनिमिषार्धमपि यः स वैष्णवाग्र्यः।।
भगवत उरुविक्रमाङ्घ्रिशाखानखमणिचन्द्रिकया निरस्ततापे।
हृदि कथमुपसीदतां पुनः स प्रभवति चन्द्र इवोदितेऽकतापः।।
विसृजति हृदयं न यस्य साक्षाद्धरिरवशाभिहितोऽप्यघौघनाशः।
प्रणयरशनया धृताङ्घ्रिपद्मः स भवति भागवतप्रधान उक्तः।।

-- श्रीमद्भागवतम् (11:2:44-55)

A person who is not attached in the egotistical sentiment of a bodily concept of life - in the sense of being of a good birth, of meritorious acts or a certain varnashrama वर्णाश्रम *status orientation, caste or race, is someone dear to the Lord.*

He who does not think in opposites in the sense of 'mine' and 'thine' about property and the body, someone who is equal and peaceful with all living beings, no doubt belongs to the best devotees.

He who neither is tempted by the opulence found in the three worlds, nor, not even for a moment, half a second or a split of a second, moves away from the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord that are the refuge of the enlightened souls and others, he who - undisturbed in his remembrance - regards the Unconquerable One as his very soul, is a topmost Vaishnava वैष्णव.

Again: how can of the toes of the Supreme Lord's feet, the feet of all those great heroic acts, how can of the lunar light radiating from the jewel-like nails that takes away the pain in the hearts, there be any pain of importance with the ones who are of worship? Can the burning heat of the sun be of any effect when the moon has risen?

He never leaves the heart of the one, whom one calls His foremost devotee, however accidentally that devotee directly might have called for Him [by means of His names], He who, bound by the ropes of love, destroys the sins regardless of their number.

Bhagavatam sings the praise of the company of the Saints:

रहूगणैतत्तपसा न याति न चेज्यया निर्वपणाद् गृहाद्वा।
न च्छन्दसा नैव जलग्निसूर्यैविना महत्पादरजोऽभिष कम्।।

-- श्रीमद्भागवतम् (5:12:12)

Dear King Rahûgana, this cannot be realized by [just] doing penance, by deity worship or by putting an end to one's material activities, nor by one's household life, by celibacy and study or by self-restraint in relation to water, fire or the sun [alone]. This is not revealed unless one smears the Dust of the Lotus Feet of the great examples all over one's body!

Jada Bharat (King of India, Bharat) says,

It is not possible to gain the esoteric knowledge and the love of the Lord through good deeds, charities, reading scriptures, or worship of water, fire or sun. It can only be had by sitting at the Lotus Feet of a Saint and manifesting His radiance within.

Lord Krishna says in Bhagavatam:

यथोपश्रयमाणस्य भगवन्तं विभावसुम्।
शीतं भयं तमोऽप्येति साधून् संसेवतस्तथा।।
निमज्जयोन्मउजतां घोरे भवाब्धौ परमायनम्।
सन्तु ब्रह्मविदः शान्ता नौर्दृढेवाप्सु मज्जताम्।।
अन्नं हि प्राणिनां प्राण आर्तानांशरणं त्वहम्।
धर्मोवित्तं नृणां प्रेस्य सन्तोऽर्वाग् विभ्यतोऽरणम्।।

-- श्रीमद्भागवतम् (11:26:31-33)

O Udho! Just as a person near the fire is free from cold, fear and darkness; so a person in the company of a Saint is free from the evil effects of his sins – the fear of life and death, and the darkness of ignorance. Just as a boat saves a drowning person, so do Saints – the embodiment of peace – rescue drowning humanity from the fearsome phenomena of the world. Just as food sustains a man, so am I the support of suffering humanity. Just as the wealth of Dharma (religious life) comes to our aid in the world beyond, so does the company of Saints save frightened souls from this vast ocean of the world.

In the Bhagavatam, Kapila Rishi says,

प्रसङ्गमजरं पाशमात्मनः कवयो विदुः।
स एव साधुषु कृतो मोक्षद्वारमपावृतम्।।

-- श्रीमद्भागवतम् (3:25:20)

Every learned man knows very well that attachment for the material is the greatest entanglement of the spirit soul. But that same attachment, when applied to the Saints, opens the door of liberation.

Satsang is of two kinds:

- Outer Satsang by Saints, by means of which the mind is cleansed, the recipient becomes worthy of a spiritual life and takes to the practice of Naam.

- Inner Satsang, by means of which the soul unites with the Lord and merges in Him.

The Bhagavatam describes a genuine Saint thus:

यत्रानुरक्ताः सहसैव धीरा व्यपोह्य देहादिषु सङ्गमूढम्।
व्रजन्ति तत्पारमहंस्यमन्त्यं यस्मिन्नहिंसोपशमः स्वधर्मः।।

-- श्रीमद्भागवतम् (5:18:23)

Association with those, who have become one with the Lord is far more elevating than the celestial pleasures of the heavens or even the happiness of salvation. The kingdom of this world and the pleasures of this life are as nothing compared to their exalted company. But association with such Saints comes only with the infinite Grace of the Lord.

Tulsi Sahib, the Saint of Hathras, says,

संत समागम हरि कथा, तुलसी दुरलभ दोइ।।
तिन पर किरपा राम की, ताहि प्रापत होइ।।

-- तुलसी साहिब

The company of Saints and the Name of God are both rare. They alone can get them who have the Grace of the Lord.

The Sikh Scriptures also point out:

हरि कीरति साधसंगति है सिरि करमन कै करमा।।
कहु नानक तिसु भइओ परापति जिसु पुरब लिखे का लहना।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सोरठ म० 5, पृ० 642)

The company of Saints is true devotion to the Lord. This is the highest form of worship. Says Nanak, he alone obtains it, who is pre-destined to receive it.

Kabir also says,

सिंहों के लेहँड़े नहीं, हंसों की नहिं पाँत।
लालों की नहिं बोरियाँ, साध न चलैं जमात।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-2 (साध का अंग 13, पृ० 125)

Just as in a forest one does not find herds of lions, nor flocks of swans, nor bags of diamonds, so one does not come across a group of Saints.

When one has an intense desire to meet a Saint, then he does so with the infinite Grace of God. Seeing them by their Darshan, touching them, listening to their words, keeping their company, and remembering them are all means of making spiritual progress. Even if we do not know them, one moment's attentive Darshan is enough to dispel ignorance and wash away sins, and is highly rewarding. It is superior to the devoted worship of many years.

Maulana Rumi also asserts:

हमनशीनी साअते बा औलिआ, बिहतर अज़ सद साला ताअत बे रिया।।

-- मसनवी मौलाना रूमी (दफ़्तर 1, पृ० 101)

Even a single moment of the company of a Saint is more rewarding than a hundred years of devoted service.

The two kinds of Satsang, outer and inner, may be explained thus:

- Outer Satsang is an effort to kindle a fire, while the other - inner Satsang - is like sitting near a fire and escaping from the cold while also accomplishing many other tasks. One who associates with a Saint, has his soul awakened by the spiritual currents emanating from Him.

- Inner Satsang is therefore supremely superior. Although even a glimpse of a Saint is productive of great benefit, it is also essential for the disciples to render physical service, to obey implicitly the Saint's instructions, and to carry out fully the spiritual discipline taught by Him. If a person renders service to a true devotee, even that has some merit. Such service does not connote keeping company or doing service with the body. Keeping company with the Saints is doubtless beneficial. Even the Mahabharata (1.27) lays down:

The very company of a Perfect Saint is conducive to spiritual progress, even when the devotee does little else.

It is only natural that in the company of the virtuous we acquire virtue, and in the company of sinners we acquire sin, even if we partake of nothing.

The highest service is to mould one's life according to the directions of the Saints, and to follow the Path marked out by them.

Service is of four kinds: with body, with mind, with wealth, and with the soul. Of these, service with the soul is the best. Those who keep the company of Saints, but do not mould their life as enjoined by them, render no service in the real sense of the term. But those who live in their company, with their permission, and carry out their directions gain much from their company.

Even if one does not see much evidence of the benefit from such company, there is no need to be discouraged, because the impressions of previous lives on our minds are so thick, that they take time to wear off. The impressions of past lives become passive in the first instance, and then gradually become altogether obliterated. So long as these impressions do not entirely vanish, a person should continue to render service to the Saints. He should have implicit faith that one day they will altogether disappear.

Ibrahim Adham, the King of Bokhara, had to remain with Kabir Sahib for a number of years. After serving him for some time, he appeared to be very calm, quiet and serene in nature. One day Kabir's wife, Loi, requested the Saint to initiate him. Kabir, who was aware of Ibrahim Adham's inner progress said, The receptacle is not yet ready.

On Loi's insistence the Saint said,

When Ibrahim Adham goes out of the house throw a basket of sweepings over him from the roof.

When this was done, Ibrahim exclaimed:

O! How I wish I were in Bokhara. Then I could have taught the guilty person a lesson.

When Kabir was told of this he remarked:

Did I not say that the vessel was unclean?

After a few more years had passed, the Saint one day told his wife, The vessel is now clean. Loi said, Outwardly he is still the same, and renders service as quietly as he did before. On hearing this Kabir said,

The previous time you merely threw house sweepings on him. This time throw a basket full of filth and, concealing yourself, listen to what he says.

When Ibrahim came out of the house the Saint's wife threw the filth on his head, spoiling all his clothes. Looking up quietly he said,

I am grateful to the person who has thrown this rubbish on my head. May God's Grace be upon him.

It takes a long time to eradicate the inner impressions. It simply cannot be hurried. One should continue to have the daily company of Saints and their Darshan. Kabir says,

ऋद्धि सिद्धि माँगौं नहीं, माँगौं तुम पै येह।
निसु दिनु दरसन साध का, कह कबीर मोहिं देय।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (सतसंग का अंग 6, पृ० 51)

O God, I ask not supernatural powers. I only want the Darshan of Saints daily. Every time I fold my hands to pray I make this request, 'Grant me, O Lord, the company of Saints every day.'

कबीर सोई दिन भला, जा दिन संत मिलाय।
अंक भरे भरि भेटिये, पाप सरीरा जाय।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-2 (साध का अंग 74, पृ० 130)

That day is really a memorable one when I meet a Saint! I embrace Him heartily and burn away all my sins.

ते दिन गये अकारथी, संगति भई न संत।
प्रेम बिना पसु जीवना, भक्ति बिना भगवंत।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (सतसंग का अंग 16, पृ० 52)

The day I do not meet a Saint is wasted. Life without love is no better than that of a beast. And there can be no devotion without the Lord.

राम बुलावा भेजिया, दिया कबीरा रोय।
जो सुख साधू संग में, सो बैकुंठ न होय।।

-- कबीर साहब का साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (सतसंग का अंग 13, पृ० 52)

God hearkens to me but I begin to weep, for the bliss that comes from the company of Saints is nowhere to be found in heaven.

जा पल दरसन साधु का, ता पल की बलिहारि।
सत्त नाम रसना बसै, लीजै जनम सुधारि।।

-- कबीर साहब का साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (सतसंग का अंग 15, पृ० 52)

Blessed is that moment when I have a glimpse of a Saint. Living with the True Name, I attain the goal of my life.

The Special Advantage of a Saint

We come across many charitable and philanthropic persons, who try to remove the suffering of people in the world. When someone is ill and suffers privation, these persons give them medicine. They render service. But we see no one, who can take upon himself the pains of others. This is the greatness only of the Saints. To be with them, is indeed a pilgrimage, where all sins are washed away.

सुख देवैं दुख को हरैं, दूर करैं अपराध।
कह कबीर वे कब मिलैं, परम सनेही साध।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-2 (साध का अंग 42, पृ० 128)

They bestow happiness, alleviate suffering and remove all faults. O Kabir! Where can I get the company of such loving Saints?

In the Saar Bachan, Swami Ji Maharaj also reiterates,

संत दया अपने चित धरें। जीव न मानें तो क्या करें।।
भेद बतावें बानी कहें। देह धरें और जग में रहें।।
जीव चितावें किरपा धार। बहुत उठावें जीवन भार।।
तौ भी कोइ परतीत न लावे। चौथा पद आसा न धारे।।

-- सार-बचन छंद बंद (38:12:61-6, पृ० 354)

Saints are merciful, but we do not heed their advice. They reveal to us the secret of life and put us in contact with the Word. They take the human form and live in the world. Through their grace they help humanity to find the true path. They even carry the load of karmas. Even then, scarcely anyone follows them.

Remember this well: Saints are free from the wanderings of the mind and from sense pleasures, for through rigid discipline, they have washed away all their past impressions. They do not have even the faintest tinge of them. We should try to find such a Saint and take refuge in Him. If the seeker is truly sincere, then by the Grace of God, he will certainly come across one and will be redeemed. Therefore, we should try to have the company of Saints, as much as possible. Rishi Narad laid great stress on the benefit of the company of Saints. He says,

तदेव साध्यतां तदेव साध्यताम्।

-- नारद भक्तिसूत्र (39-42)

Worship only the Saint.

Satsang is a powerful spiritual school or college, where practical lessons are imparted in spirituality and love. Satsang is a wonderful workshop, where the tangles of the mind are set straight, and one is so chiselled, that he can realize himself and God. Sahjo Bai has beautifully described the greatness of Satsang in the following words:

साध संग में चाँदना, सकल अँधेरा और।
सहजो दुर्लभ पाइये, सतसंगत में ठौर।।
साध संग तीरथ बड़ो, ता में नीर विचार।
सहजो न्हाये परइये, मुक्ति पदारथ चार।।
जो आवै सतसंग में, जाति बरन कुल खोय।
सहजो मैल कुचैल जल, मिलै सु गंगा होय।।
सहजो संगत साध की, काग हंस ह्वै जाय।
तजि के भच्छ अभच्छ कूँ, मोती चुगि चुगि खाय।।

-- सहजोबाई की बानी (पृ० 12)

Satsang, or the company of a Saint, ushers in Light and dispels darkness. But such company is difficult to obtain. Satsang is a sacred place where flow the waters of discernment; and bathing in them brings all the four salvations. Whoever comes to the Satsang of a Saint loses the sense of caste, creed and colour, like the muddy waters that become pure and clear by joining the Ganges water. By the company of Saints a crow turns into a swan. Giving up filthy food, it picks up pearls as its repast.

Guru Arjan eulogizes Satsang in the following words:

साध कै संगि मुख ऊजल होत।। साधसंगि मलु सगली खोत।।
साध कै संगि मिटै अभिमानु।। साध कै संगि प्रगटै सुगिआनु।।
साध कै संगि बुझै प्रभु नेरा।। साधसंगि सभु होत निबेरा।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी सुखमनी म० 5, पृ० 271)

In the company of the Holy, one's face becomes radiant. In the company of the Holy, all filth is removed. In the company of the Holy, egotism is eliminated. In the company of the Holy, spiritual wisdom is revealed. In the company of the Holy, God is understood to be near at hand. In the company of the Holy, all conflicts are resolved.

The spiritual influence of Saints is indeed great. By their magnanimity, which acts like the philosopher's stone, the wicked become virtuous, thieves give up stealing, the drunk-

ard gives up drinking, and evil-doers abandon their evil habits. History is full of instances of such a nature. Through the glory of Saints, Sadhana – a butcher, Ganika – a prostitute, Valmiki – a dacoit and Sajjan – a thug, all became Saints.

Satsang is an exalted place of pilgrimage. It removes millions of sins of numerous past lives, making the mind pure and clear. Just as fire burns away the dross of gold and makes it pure, so does the company of Saints burn away the sins of past lives and make a person pure.

There is no more complete and useful a machine for transforming evil thoughts into noble ones than Satsang. In the company of the virtuous, one imbibes virtue and becomes free of all blemishes and sins. Spiritually evolved souls always fill the environment, in which they live, with currents of purity. Even the worst of sinners cannot escape their influence, but turn noble; and in the company of Saints, one is dyed in the hue of the Lord. Maulana Rumi says,

ऐ लिक़ाए तू जवाबे–हर–सवाल,
मुश्किल अज़ तू हल शवद बे क़ीलो–क़ाल।

-- मसनवी मौलाना रूमी (दफ़्तर 1, पृ० 42)

The face of a Saint is the answer to every question, because in His presence all our difficulties are automatically resolved without our even mentioning them.

Bathing in the holy waters of Satsang proves immediately fruitful. Maulana Rumi says,

हर किह् ख़्वाहद हमनशीनी बा खुदा, गो नशीनद दर हजूरे–औलिआ।

-- मसनवी मौलाना रूमी (दफ़्तर 2, पृ० 209)

हमनशीनी साअते बा औलिआ, बिहतर अज़ सद साला ताअत बे रिया।

-- मसनवी मौलाना रूमी (दफ़्तर 1, पृ० 101)

If you wish to meet the Lord go and sit at the Lotus Feet of a Saint, because His company, even for a moment, is better than a hundred years of sincere prayer.

The true Mosque lies within the Saints, and that is the place for our worship. Crows and cranes, like us, that live on the filth of sense pleasures become transformed into swans by partaking of the Ambrosial Name. Tulsi Das says,

मज्जन फल पेखिअ ततकाला। काक होहिं पिक बकउ मराला।।
सुनि आचरज करै जनि कोई। सतसंगति महिमा नहिं गोई।।

-- श्रीरामचरितमानस (1:2:1)

The result of dipping into the sacred waters of this king of holy places is instantly perceived: crows turn into cuckoos and herons into swans. Let no one marvel to hear of this transformation; the glory of contact with saints is no secret.

The very sight of Saints rids us of sense cravings. History speaks of instances, where the sight (Darshan) of Guru Nanak, Kabir, Namdev and Jesus Christ purified the hearts even of fallen women. m

11

DEVOTION (*Bhakti* भक्ति)

Devotion is an age-old and innate quality of dedication, religious fervour and ardent attachment in man. It is described in many places in the Veda Mantras and the Upanishads. The Bhagavad Gita, Bhagavatam Purana and other Scriptures also comment on devotion at considerable length. Guru Nanak also pointed out that the Vedas and other religious books have always extolled the value of devotion.

रैणि अंधारी निरमल जोति।। नाम बिना झूठे कुचल कछोति।।
बेदु पुकारै भगति सरोति।। सुणि सुणि मानै वेखै जोति।।
सासतृ सिमृति नामु दृडामं।। गुरमुखि सांति ऊतम करामं।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (बिलावल म० 1, पृ० 831)

The night (of life) is dark, but the Light within is pure. Bereft of the Name, all is worthless. The Vedas commend the song of Devotion. He who hears and believes, sees the Light (within). The Shastras and Smritees too stress on the Name. The Gurumukhs live in peace and tranquility, doing deeds of sublime purity.

In the religious books of the Hindus, two methods have been specified for attaining communion with God:

- The path of (spiritual) knowledge (Gyan Marg ज्ञान–मार्ग).
- The path of love or devotion – (Bhakti-Marg भक्ति–मार्ग).

The path of knowledge is also described in the Gita, but at the same time it is very clearly asserted that the path of knowledge cannot be followed successfully without faith and devotion.

अश्रद्दधानाः पुरुषाः धर्मस्यास्य परंतप।
अप्राप्य मां निवर्तन्ते मृत्युसंसारवर्त्मनि।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (9:3)

O Arjuna! Those persons who have no faith in Me, do not have communion with Me are born and die again and again in this transitory world. They do not attain Salvation.

God cannot be known through the sense organs. Neither can He be known through the intellect, nor by reasoning; He can be realized only by devotion. And austerities and incarnations, without devotion, are of no avail.

What is Bhakti भक्ति?

The word Bhakti in Sanskrit means the repetition of Holy Names or prayers of devotion, remembrance or worship. To give one's love and attachment to a highly qualified person or to the Deity is called devotion. In other words, unceasing attention and love coming from the heart of a person for a spiritually advanced and noble soul is termed devotion.

Guru Nanak Sahib said that God Himself is devotion. Guru Amar Das stated that devotion to God is love for Him, and this love cannot be achieved by any outward show.

Devotion is a quality, by which the soul rises upwards and attains communion with God. Thus God is attracted downwards towards His devotee and comes and dwells within him.

Narad Rishi says,

सा त्वस्मिन् परमप्रेमरूपा।।

-- नारद भक्ति सूत्र (प्रेम दर्शन 2)

Ardent love for the Lord is Devotion.

Devotion to the Lord is a strong magnetic power, by which, the attention is removed from worldly objects and becomes fully concentrated in the Lord. There is thus no interference by ones intellect or power of reasoning. Devotion is the act of withdrawing our attachment from all directions and fixing it only in the Lord.

A true devotee alone can perform devotion, because his mind and his body are completely engrossed in love and adoration of the Lord; so much so that God Himself comes and meets him.

This type of devotion is not material. It brooks no interference. It is a strong magnetic current, which attracts the soul towards God, and connects it with its Beloved. A tiny glimpse or idea of such a love is partially portrayed in some of the rare types of true love in this world, because the principle underlying worldly love and spiritual devotion is the same. The only difference is that worldly love is transitory, and is subject to dissolution. It cannot give us the same high degree of happiness and eternal bliss, as does spiritual love and devotion.

Everybody wishes to attain the bliss of God-realization.

नदरी आवै तिसु सिउ मोहु।। किउ मिलीऐ प्रभ अबिनासी तोहि।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (बिलावल म० 5, पृ० 801)

He is attached to what he sees. How can I meet You, O Imperishable Lord?

The reward of true devotion is communion with God (God-realization). And devotion to God is the highest form of practice, by which to achieve communion with the Lord, as compared to yoga, knowledge, contemplation, repetition, penance, pilgrimages, worship and so forth.

Guru Arjan says,

सभहू को रसु हो।।
काहू जोग काहू भोग काहू गिआन काहू धिआन।। काहू का डंड धरि हो।।
काहू जाप काहू ताप काहू पूजा होम नेम।। काहू का गउनु करि हो।।
काहू तीर काहू नीर काहू बेद बीचार।। नानका भगति प्रिअ हो।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी म० 5, पृ० 213)

The Lord is the essence of all. Some practice Yoga; some indulge in pleasures; some live in spiritual wisdom; some live doing meditation. Some are bearers of the staff. Some chant; some practice deep, austere meditation; some worship Him in adoration; some practice daily rituals. Some live the life of a wanderer; some live by the shore; some live on the water. Some study the Vedas. Worship of the Lord is dear to Nanak.

Devotion is the method by which one can meet the Infinite Lord who is eternal and deathless. Shandilya Rishi says,

हेया रागत्वादिति चेन्नोत्तमास्पदत्वात् संगवत्।।

-- शांडिल्य भक्ति सूत्र (21)

Devotion consists in withdrawing one's love, ideas and thoughts from worldly objects, attaching them with the Lord alone, and in keeping oneself wholly engrossed in this thought.

Bhakti leads to lasting communion or contact with the Lord, by withdrawing one's attention from the objects of the world.

Shankaracharya also praises the value of devotion in Vivekachudamani. He says,

मोक्षकारणसामग्र्यां भक्तिरेव गरीयसी। स्वस्वरूपानुसन्धानं भक्तिरित्यभिधीयते।।

-- विवेकचूडामणिः (31)

Among things conducive to Liberation, devotion (Bhakti) holds the supreme place. The seeking after one's real nature is designated as devotion.

Bhakti may be difficult. There may be certain barriers or restraining ties, but it has the highest and the purest aim, and one should not deviate from it. It is like our association with people. We always try to leave evil associates, but we cling to good ones. Similarly, we should abandon our attachment to the world and its objects and cling to attachment or devotion to the Lord, which will withdraw our attention from worldly objects and connect us with Him. We should cling to that type of attachment.

Devotion is an Elixir, because it gives us the gift of Eternal Life. And the fountain of that Elixir is in the hands of a Satguru or Master. If one is able to create conditions of devotion in himself, then he himself becomes eternal or everlasting, like the object to whom he has given his devotion. The taste of devotion is intoxicating; it attracts the mind and creates a condition of intoxicating bliss, which cannot be described either by pen or tongue. It is impossible for anyone to express the joy and happiness, which springs from Bhakti. It is beyond description. Its taste is the prerogative of the soul alone. The enjoyment of its taste may be compared to the case of a dumb man enjoying sweets; although he enjoys the taste, he cannot describe it.

Difference between Love and Devotion

Devotion should be of such a nature that a person, while living in this world and doing his daily work, should surrender everything to the Lord and should not forget Him even for a moment; and if he were to do so, he would become restless.

Lord Krishna clearly states in the Bhagavad Gita:

योगिनामपि सर्वेषां मद्गतेनान्तरात्मना।
श्रद्धावान्भजते यो मां स मे युक्ततमो मतः।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (6:47)

The path of Devotion is superior to the path of Knowledge. But amongst all seekers, I consider him to be superior and foremost who thinks of Me within himself and contemplates on Me with love and devotion.

Bhakti is described in the Krishna Leela. It is also briefly described in Bhagavatam. The gopies (cowherd girls) had dedicated everything – their physical selves, their mind, their souls and their possessions – to their Lord. Their minds were always engrossed in remembering Him and they were always thinking of Him, so much so that they would see their Lord everywhere. To these lovelorn gopies, Krishna one day said,

न पारयेऽहम निरवद्यसंयुजां स्वसाधुकृत्यं विबुधायुषापि वः।
या माभजन् दुर्जरगेहश्रृङ्खला संवृश्च्य तद् वः प्रतियातु साधुना।।

-- श्रीमद्भागवतम् (10:32:22)

O gopies! You have broken the iron-like strong hoops of worldly attachments and have merged yourselves in me with Devotion and Love. This state of your mind is beyond any reproach, and I am not capable of repaying a love like yours. Therefore, you should kindly relieve me of that burden.

Krishna once sent a message to the gopies through Uddhava, and while giving the message to Uddhava, his throat was choked and his eyes were shedding tears of love. He said,

गच्छोद्धव व्रजं सौम्य पित्रोर्नौ प्रीतिमावह।
गोपीनां मद्वियोगाधिं मत्संदेशैर्विमोचय।।
ता मन्मनस्का मत्प्राणा मदर्थे त्यक्तदैहिकाः।
मामेव दयितं प्रेष्ठमात्मानं मनसा गताः।

ये त्यक्तलोकधर्माश्च मदर्थे तान् बिभर्म्यहम्।।
मयि ताः प्रेयसां प्रेष्ठे दूरस्थे गोकुलस्त्रियः।
स्मरन्त्योऽङ्ग विमुह्यियंति विरहौत्कठ्यकातराः।।
धरयन्तिकृच्छ्रेण प्रायः प्राणन्कथञ्चन।
प्रत्यागमनसंदेशैर्बल्लव्यो मे मदात्मिका।।

-- श्रीमद्भागवतम् (10:46:3-6)

O Uddhava! These gopies have surrendered their minds and their hearts to me. I am their life. They have forgotten all their worldly duties for my sake, and all their worldly responsibilities have been surrendered at my feet. I am, therefore, always thinking of them. These women of Gokul consider me to be the highest object of love and they are restless in my absence. When they remember me, they forget about their own bodies and minds. And now they are just living from day-to-day in the hope that I will soon return to their village. They are one with me and I am one with them. (Bhagavatam)

Uddhava went to their village and spoke to the gopies about Yoga. He was surprised to see their condition, for they were having the vision of Krishna, both inside and outside at all times of the day and night. The gopies themselves told him about their state of mind in the following words:

There is no room left in our hearts for anything other than our Krishna. That Lord is in every pore of our body. When we walk or talk, when we are awake or asleep, we cannot forget; nor can we be away from the vision of our Lord even for one moment. Uddhava, you have given us a very elevating discourse and we are extremely grateful to you; but we are helpless because our minds and bodies are full of devotion to him. An ocean cannot be contained in a pitcher, and our eyes are now restless to see our Lord Krishna.

They then continued:

O Uddhava! We are not capable of doing any yoga practice. Being women, we cannot understand the yoga of knowledge. How should we do our spiritual practice? You ask us to close our eyes wherein the image of our Lord is always present. Good fellow! You have a sweet voice and a sweet tongue, but we are not prepared to listen to your deceitful words. You ask us to keep

our hair tied and our ears torn like those of a yogi. Who is prepared to take this trouble? You ask us to besmear our bodies with ashes (Vibhooti) and to give up the use of sandalwood. You do not know that we are burning in the fire of separation. The Lord for whom the yogis do such austerities and roam from place because they are separated from Him – that same Lord is seen by us within. He cannot be separated from us even for a moment, just as our shadows cannot be separated from us.

The gopies then told Uddhava:

O Uddhava! Please go and give your yoga teachings to people who are suffering because of separation from the Lord. Here, He is with us at all times, for we have become one with our dear Lord.

- See Bhagavatam (10:47); Soordas, Bhramargeet.

-- श्रीमद्भागवतम् (10:47); सूरदास, भ्रमरगीत

Devotion, love and intense love (bhakti भक्ति, prem प्रेम and ishq इश्क़) are three separate names, but they have the same meaning. There is no difference. There is, however, a slight difference in the degree of their intensity.

Devotion is a spontaneous magnetic current which attracts one towards one's Beloved. And love consists in merging oneself into one's Beloved. It is one-pointed attention and attachment to the Lord. In other words, it is the culmination of devotion.

Devotion consists in One-Pointed Attention and needs only One Support

Devotion is not a subject for reasoning or even for thinking. It is an intuitive emotion of love. The intellect cannot comprehend it. It has a strong and spontaneous magnetic power, which is beyond one's control, and which attracts one to an object seen or even unseen.

A devotee must have faith. Firm belief is a prerequisite. When that belief takes the form of faith, it turns into devotion, and eventually it culminates in love. Worldly attractions or pleasures do not interest such a devotee. Only love for the Lord and a strong attraction towards Him remain.

To remove from the mind, all desires for the things of the world and turn the mind towards the Lord alone, is devotion. Thus all our desires and all our actions are surrendered to the Lord. The ego vanishes automatically, the devotee thinks that everything belongs to the Lord, and that he himself also belongs to Him, and ultimately he merges in Him.

Shankaracharya says,

सत्यपि भेदापगमे नाथ तवाहं न मामकीनस्त्वम।
सामुद्रो हि तरंगः क्वचन समुद्रो न तारंगः।।

-- आदि शंकराचार्य (विष्णु शतपदी स्तोत्र 3)

O Lord, although there is no difference between you and me, yet I am yours and you are not me! Why? The waves arise from the ocean, but the ocean does not come out of the waves.

Guru Nanak, at one time, was employed in the provision store of a king and was once weighing some grain on a pair of scales. After he had weighed twelve times and was weighing the thirteenth (tera तेरा), he called out 'tera, tera!' (Besides the figure 13, tera also means yours). He was so absorbed in the love of the Lord, that as soon as he said tera, his mind's attention immediately centered on the Lord. As he continued weighing, instead of going to the next number and the succeeding numbers, he constantly cried out, "tera, tera" – O Lord, I am yours. I am yours, and this is all yours.

All worldly ties are broken and only the support of the Lord remains for one, who is engaged in devotion without any idea of self. So long as such devotion is directed to lower beings, instead of the Lord, it is not the highest type. But as soon as the devotion is directed towards God alone, leaving no room for worldly objects, reasoning, intellect or other supports, then instinctively a voice comes from the individual's mind, uttering the following words:

प्रभ जी तू मेरे प्रान अधारै।।
नमसकार डंडउति बंदना अनिक बार जाउ बारै।।
ऊठत बैठज सोवत जागत इहु मनु तुझहि चितारै।।
सूख दूख इसु मन की बिरथा तुझ ही आगै सारै।।

तू मेरी ओट बल बुधि धनु तुम ही तुमहि मेरै परवारै।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (बिलावल म० 5, पृ० 820)

O Lord, you are the support of my life. I bow to you hundreds and thousands of times. While sitting, walking, sleeping or awake, I am thinking only of you. I describe to You my pleasure and pain, and the state of this mind. You are my support, my family, my strength, my wealth and everything.

All observances, except devotion, viz., Karma कर्म (Actions), Gyan ज्ञान (Knowledge) and Yoga योग (Discipline) are performed with some effect. In devotion one has to seek only the support of God. So long as we depend on anything other than God, the temple of our mind (human body) does not become fit for God to enter.

ख़ाना ख़ाली कुन दिला ता मंज़िले–जाना शवी,
कीं हवसनाकां जिगर रा जाए दीगर मीकुनद।

-- दीवाने-हाफ़िज़ (पृ० 212)

O heart! You should vacate your house so that there will be room for your Lord to enter; otherwise He will go somewhere else. (Hafiz)

Tulsi Das says,

एक भरोसो एक बल, एक आस बिस्वास।
रामरूप स्वाती जलद, चातक तुलसीदास।।

-- वैराग्य संदीपनी (दोहा 15)

I have the support of only One. He is my strength, He is my hope, and He is my faith. To my Guru, I offer all my love. I am restless for His Lotus Feet like the (chatrak) rain bird is for a drop of rain from the Swati (Arcturus) constellation.

Devotion, Action, Knowledge and Discipline (Bhakti, Karma, Gyan and Yoga)

Action, knowledge and discipline are practices of attaining communion with God. But devotion is both a practice and the reward of such a practice. For the path of knowledge and for the path of Yoga, one must have certain qualifications to be able to make any progress. But devotion can be performed by the weak, the sick, or even by one, who is of

low intellect. It is easier than the path of knowledge, because one does not fall or waver, once he has taken up this path.

In the Gita, there is mention of Gyan Marg ज्ञान–मार्ग (the path of knowledge) and of Bhakti Marg भक्ति–मार्ग (the path of devotion) for attaining communion with God. But as already mentioned, Lord Krishna has given preference to devotion.

Some people think that knowledge is a means for achieving devotion, whereas others think that they are both interconnected. Narad Rishi believed devotion to be the means, as well as the end. But another great Rishi of ancient times considered that both yoga and knowledge were essential for devotion because, according to him, devotion needs concentration and purity of mind, and these are considered to be the essential qualifications for knowledge and yoga.

The Bhagavatam says, Devotion to God creates knowledge. Such knowledge is the true knowledge, which results in attachment to the Lord. Mere superficial knowledge gives nothing, nor does devotion without faith. And knowledge without faith is also considered to be useless.

अथात्मनोऽर्थभूतस्य यथोऽनर्थपरम्परा।
संसृतिस्तद्व्यवच्छेदो भक्त्या परमया गुरौ।।
वासुदेवे भगवति भक्तियोगः समाहितः।
सध्रीचीनेन वैराग्यं ज्ञानं च जनयिष्यति।।

The real interest of the living entity is to get out of the nescience that causes him to endure repeated birth and death. The only remedy is to surrender unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead through His representative. Unless one renders devotional service unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one cannot possibly become completely detached from this material world, nor can he possibly manifest real knowledge.

सोऽचिरादेव राजर्षे स्यादच्युतकथाश्रयः।
श्रृण्वतः श्रद्दधानस्य नित्यदा स्यादधीयतः।।

O best of kings, one who is faithful, who is always hearing the glories of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is always engaged in the culture of God's consciousness and in hearing of the Lord's activities, very soon becomes eligible to see the Supreme Personality of Godhead face to face.

यत्र भागवता राजन् साधवो विशदाशयाः।
भगवद्गुणानुकथनश्रवणव्यग्रचेतसः।।
तस्मिन्महन्मुखरिता मधुभिच्चरित्रपीयूपशेषसरितः परितः स्रवन्ति।

My dear King, in the place where pure devotees live, following the rules and regulations, the purely conscious are engaged with great eagerness in hearing and chanting the glories of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In that place if one gets a chance to hear their constant flow of nectar, which is exactly like the waves of a river; one will forget the necessities of life—namely hunger and thirst—and become immune to all kinds of fear, lamentation and illusion.

ता ये पिबन्त्यवितृपो नृप गाढकर्णैस्तान्न स्पृशन्त्यशनतृड्भयशोकमोहाः।।

Because the conditioned soul is always disturbed by the bodily necessities such as hunger and thirst, it has very little time to cultivate attachment to hearing the nectarean words of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

एतैरुपद्रुतो नित्यं जीवलोकः स्वभावजैः।
न करोति हरेर्नूनं कथामृतनिधौ रतिम्।।
प्रजापतिपतिः साक्षाद्भगवान्गिरिशो मनुः।
दक्षादयः प्रजाध्यक्षा नैष्ठिका सनकादयः।।
मरीचिरत्र्यङ्गिरसौ पुलस्त्यः पुलः क्रतुः।
भृगुर्वसिष्ठ इत्येते मदन्ता ब्रह्मवादिनः।।
अद्यापि वाचस्पतयस्तपोविद्यासमाधिभिः।
पश्यन्तोऽपि न पश्यन्ति पश्यन्तं परमेश्वरम्।।

The most powerful Lord Brahmā, the father of all progenitors; Lord Shiva; Manu, Daksha and the other rulers of humankind; the four saintly first-class brahmacharis headed by Sanaka and Sanatana; the great sages Marichi, Atri, Angira, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Bhrgu and Vasishtha; and my humble self [Narada] are all stalwart brahmanas who can speak authoritatively on Vedic literature. We are very powerful because of austerities, meditation and education. Nonetheless, even after inquiring about the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whom we always see, we do not know perfectly about Him.

शब्दब्रह्मणि दुष्पारे चरन्त उरुविस्तरे।
मन्त्रलिङ्गैर्व्यवच्छिन्नं भजन्तो न विदुः परम्।।

Despite the cultivation of spiritual knowledge, which is unlimited, and the worship of different demigods by the symptoms of Vedic mantras, demigod worship does not help one to understand the supreme powerful Personality of Godhead.

यदा यमनुगृह्याति भगवानात्मभावितः।
स जहाति मतिं लोके वेदे च परिनिष्ठिताम्।।

When a person is fully engaged in devotional service, he is favoured by the Lord, who bestows His causeless mercy. At such a time, the awakened devotee gives up all material activities and ritualistic performances mentioned in the Vedas.

तस्मात्कर्मसु बर्हिष्मन्नज्ञानादर्थकाशिषु।
मार्थदृष्टिं कृथाः श्रोत्रस्पर्शिष्वस्पृष्टवस्तुषु।।

My dear King Barhishmān, you should never out of ignorance take to the Vedic rituals or to fruitive activity, which may be pleasing to hear about or which may appear to be the goal of self-interest. You should never take these to be the ultimate goal of life.

स्वं लोकं न विदुस्ते वै यत्र देवो जनार्दनः। आहुर्धूम्रधियोवेदं सकर्मकमतद्विदः।।

Those who are less intelligent accept the Vedic ritualistic ceremonies as all in all. They do not know that the purpose of the Vedas is to understand one's own home, where the Supreme Personality of Godhead lives. Not being interested in their real home, they are illusioned and search after other homes.

आस्तीर्य दर्भैः प्रागग्रैः कात्स्न्र्येन क्षितिमण्डलम्।
स्तब्धो बृहद्वधन्मानी कर्म नावैषि यत्परम्।।
तत्कर्म हरितोषं यत्सा विद्या तन्मतिर्यया।।

My dear King, the entire world is covered with the sharp points of kusha grass, and on the strength of this you have become proud because you have killed various types of animals in sacrifices. Because of your foolishness, you do not know that devotional service is the only way one can please the Supreme Personality of Godhead. You cannot understand this fact. Your only activities should be those that can please the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Our education should be such that we can become elevated to divine consciousness.

-- श्रीमद्भागवतम् (4:29:36-49)

In the Adi Granth it is stated:

गुर की मति तूं लेहि इआने।। भगति बिना बहु डूबे सिआने।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी सुखमनी म० 5, पृ० 288)

Take the Guru's advice, you ignorant fool! Without devotion, even the cleverer ones have drowned.

Tulsi Das says,

सो सुतंत्र अवलंब न आना। तेहि आधीन ग्यान बिग्याना।
भगति तात अनुपम सुखमूला। मिलइ जो संत होइँ अनुकूला।।

-- श्रीरामचरितमानस (3:16:2)

Bhakti is complete in itself and is not dependent on any other practice. On the other hand, knowledge and detachment are dependent upon it.

Devotion is Natural

The path of devotion is the easiest, and everybody is capable of treading it. The feeling of devotion is to be found in human beings and in some of the lower types of life like cattle, dogs and some other animals. It is a natural quality and is designed by God Himself. Everyone has it to some extent, although it is more developed in some than in others.

There are five different types of devotees:

- Hirsi हिर्सी - Those who practice devotion only superficially, simply because they see others who are devoted and try to imitate them.

- Arta आर्त - Restless persons.

- Jigyasu जिज्ञासु -Seekers.

- Artharthi अर्थार्थी - Selfish persons.

- Gyani ज्ञानी - Intellectual persons.

Hirsi: People of this type have no real desire for devotion, but when they see genuine devotees, they imitate them and thus come into the company of Saints. Naturally, it takes a very long time for them to reach the stage of true devotion.

Arta: Those who become restless because of worldly troubles, as a result of which they seek the protection of the Lord. They believe God to be everything. This devotion is of two kinds: One is of a lower order, and the other is of a very high order. The devotion of a lower order is like that

of a sheep dog for his master. Even if the shepherd is very poor or of a low status, to the dog he is the king of kings, and nothing can shake the dog from his devotion to his master. Such devotion is simple and ordinary. But gradually, it becomes of a very high order, and in due course such a person desires nothing, but love for God to be present in him. Such a devotee does not see the faults or weaknesses of the object of his devotion.

Jigyasu: A Jigyasu is a seeker, who wants to know something about God. What he is able to learn, creates belief and then faith in Him. Then the feeling of devotion is naturally aroused. In the beginning, however, he tries to thwart his own ideal by reasoning. But gradually, all his doubts are removed and he subsequently loves not only God, but His creation also.

Artharthi: This is a person, who has some worldly or religious purpose in mind, and indulges in devotion for an ulterior motive such as wealth, fame, power, and so forth. But when his selfish motives are fulfilled, he does not leave devotion. Naturally his love for and faith in the Lord, as a result of which, he satisfied his ulterior motives, does not diminish. In the beginning, he loves the devotees of the Lord and hates others, but gradually, this is removed and in due course, he loves all the creatures of the Lord.

Gyani: This is a different type of devotion from the other four types, because such a person, having knowledge, knows about action and reaction, about religion and spiritual matters, and he then becomes a devotee of the Lord with faith and love. Such a man is ready to make progress, and as soon as he has an opportunity to meet a Master, he is immediately successful on the Path.

The Principles of Devotion

The first principle underlying devotion is that God is the Creator of all and is omniscient. He is pure, flawless and whole. He is omnipresent. Human beings, the lower species of life, and in fact the entire universe are a sign of His exis-

tence. We are all His children. Hence there is a natural mutual affinity between ourselves and all others. For this reason we should respect our elders, be kind to those who are younger, be friendly with our equals, and we should also love our enemies.

Love your enemies. (St. Matthew 5:44 St. Luke 6:27, 35)

The second principle is that this universe is His creation, and it is all beautiful and full of happiness. Each one, of course, looks at this world according to the state or condition of his own mind.

The third principle is that one should be happy in the Will of God, and should always remain contented and grateful for whatever happens to him. Whatever is being done is for our own good. This is beyond any shadow of doubt. What we may consider as trouble has actually come in order to elevate the condition of our mind. It is well known that gold becomes purer and brighter, when it is put into fire. Therefore, one should never complain. The fourth principle is that one should consider it to be the greatest sin to hurt the feelings of others. To provide comfort and happiness to others, should be considered the highest obligation, because non-violence or non-hatred in thought, word and deed is the highest form of religious duty.

The fifth principle is that one should become a devotee by taking support from his Guru or Master, so that by being in contact with such a higher being, one may also eventually attain the same stage.

One should never talk of I-ness. One should talk only of Him, so that in due course, there will be nothing but Him. The highest aim of devotion is described in the following lines by Kabir:

तूँ तूँ करता तूँ भया, मुझ में रही न हूँ।
वारी तेरे नाम पर, जित देखूँ तित तूँ।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-2 (सुमिरन का अंग 37, पृ० 96)

I have been saying: 'Thou, Thou' and I have become Thou, my self having completely vanished. I am grateful for Thy Name, because by speaking it, I see 'Thou' everywhere I look.

मैं मैं बड़ी बलाय है, सको तो निकसो भागि।
कहै कबीर कब लागि रहै, रुई लपेटी आगि।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (चितावनी का अंग 67, पृ० 64)

To talk in terms of self is a very great evil. If you can be relieved of it; try to do so, because, O Kabir! A piece of cotton cannot escape from the clutches of fire if it is brought into contact with it.

तू मुझ में मैं तुझ में, किऊँ कर देखूँ भेद।
तुझे छोड़ जब मैं लखूँ, तब ही उपजे खेद।।
तेरे होते मैं कहाँ, सब कुछ देखा तोर।
तेरी ओर दृष्टि गई, रहा न कुछ भी मोर।।

You are in me, and I am in you. How can I see any difference? And, whenever I wish to discover a difference, leaving you aside, I meet with trouble. When you are, I am not, because I have experienced this from all aspects. Whenever I see you, nothing remains of me.

मोर तोर की जेवरी, बटि बाधाँ संसार।
दास कबीर क्यों बंधे, जा के नाम अधार।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (चितावनी का अंग 56, पृ० 63)

The rope of 'mine and thine' is completely tied around the people of the world, but this humble Kabir is not bound by it, because he has the support of the Lord.

Prerequisites for Devotion

In order to be truly devoted, it is necessary to believe in the omnipresence of the Lord. True devotees are always welcome at the Gates of God. They give their devotion to God through the grace of the Lotus Feet of Saints, because it is only through them that they are able to see God everywhere, and are thus devoted to Him.

Devotion is a natural attribute of the heart. But this quality can be developed only through the grace of a True Master, who is himself dyed in devotion to the Lord. The knowledge obtained from books is not sufficient.

Why should one be devoted to somebody else, and to whom should one be devoted? How should that devotion be

performed? What methods should be used for that purpose? All these things can be learned from a Master.

Sant Ravi Das says,

साधसंगति बिना भाउ नही ऊपजै भाव बिनु भगति नही होइ तेरी।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (धनासरी भगत रविदास, पृ० 694)

Without Sadh Sangat, the Company of the Holy, Love for the Lord does not well up; without this love, Your devotional worship cannot be performed.

Why Should we be devoted?

The quality of devotion is working instinctively in all human beings. It is a natural inclination in everybody to live in communion or in happiness and joy with somebody else, because man by nature is a social being and is not content, unless he is able to become one with the object of his affection. Till such a time, he remains restless and his mind wavers.

You cannot see your face in ordinary plate glass, but if it is chemically made into a mirror, you can see your face in it. In a similar manner, if a pure heart is filled with devotion and love, that heart is able to see in itself the image of God.

To Whom should we be devoted?

We should be devoted to that which is sublime, beautiful and perfect, which has a power of attraction like that of a powerful magnet and can draw the minds of others into its own, and which fills our minds with a peculiar happiness and tranquillity. It is true that the feeling of devotion is not awakened towards anyone who does not possess the fullness of beauty and an attractive form.

In this world people have devotion of various kinds. Some are devoted to amassing wealth. Others are happy in devotion to their family. Still others take pleasure in becoming great in the eyes of society and try to acquire knowledge and artistic abilities.

The devotees of wealth work day and night ceaselessly and are able to amass some wealth, but this leads to a

desire for amassing more and more. If we are able to save a thousand rupees, we are then naturally inclined to save more hundreds of thousands, and this money-amassing obsession completely overpowers us.

One who is greedy cannot, because of that greed, freely use his wealth, nor can he leave it. He is, therefore, burning in the secret fires of his greed. When one devotes himself to wealth, he is always afraid of thieves and is constantly thinking of how to keep his wealth safe in vaults or strong boxes. This worry becomes a part of his life. He is also afraid of his wealth being taken away by the powers that be. All comfort and peace of mind are destroyed by the constant worry.

Lord Ramachandra says in the Yoga Vasishtha:

सत्कार्यपद्मरजनी दुःखकैरेंवचन्द्रिका।
सुद्दष्टिदीपिकावात्या कल्लोलौघतरङ्गिणी।

-- योगवसिष्ठ (1:1:13:13)

Amassing of Riches, like the shadow of night, overcasts the good qualities of men, and like moonbeams, brings to bloom the buds of their misery. Like a hurricane, it blows away the brightness of a fair prospect, and resembles a sea with huge surges (of disquiet).

A greedy person is extremely selfish, because he is not capable of using his wealth for his own needs, and will not dole it out amongst the poor or others. So it is true, that wealth is not worthy of our devotion. We were not born for amassing wealth, because wealth is like a shadow that lengthens and shrinks at different times, and when wealth goes, it causes a mental disturbance. Actually, wealth is for the use of man, and man was not born to be its slave.

Our relatives, our family and our community – all are subject to extinction by death. Nobody is free from death, and everybody is going his own way. If all these people are subject to death and separation, why should we attach oneself to them? They all have different temperaments and naturally there are differences of opinion. Consequently, devotion to them cannot be unchanging or always the same.

Devotion to one's community and to one's family is better than devotion to one's own self. And devotion to one's own nation is still better. But this has natural pitfalls, because it gives rise to favouritism and group rivalry. Sometimes one has to do desirable and undesirable things, in order to keep up one's own reputation, for one is always concerned about the criticism of others.

Yet, it is desirable that a person engaged in devotion to his nation or country should be fearless of all criticism, should stick to his principles, and should not be afraid of any adverse opinion. Truth will not diminish and should never be abandoned.

Selfish people even go so far as to destroy the happiness of others for the fulfilment of their own desires. Such a person was Nero, the Emperor of Rome, who was fiddling while Rome was burning.

People, who are absorbed in devotion to their own family, often create enmities with others. People who are devotees of their country, also quarrel with each other and with other countries. The fire of war and enmity in the world is entirely due to the pugnacious tendencies of such people.

Similarly, those who are proud of their intellectual attainments are often fond of arguments and wrangling, which lead them farther away from the Truth. Such people always try to fight on the plane of intellect. The egotism of knowledge swells their heads, and they are so intoxicated by it, that at times they even forget their principles. Brother becomes an enemy of brother, and by the help of science, technology and learning, weapons of destruction are produced. This type of knowledge is constantly on the increase and is a cause of conflict and misery.

All these things – wealth, family, intellect, and so on – may be good for our own use and happiness, but they must be used properly; and because it is not possible to do so, they are not worthy of our devotion. They are incomplete in themselves, and are not permanent.

Amongst all the types of devotion, the highest is that which is offered to God (Sat Purush सत्पुरुष), who is One, Unchangeable and Indestructible. He is the Creator of all, and we are all His children. By loving God, we are also able to love all His creatures, because we are all brothers and God is the Father of all of us. Through this love, there flows the current of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man.

Guru Bhakti गुरु–भक्ति - Devotion to the Master

We have not seen God. How can we worship Him or offer our devotion to Him? Under these circumstances, whom should we worship? Who is the being, in whom God has manifested, and who is able to create the right conditions for devotion and for helping us to increase our love for Him? Such a person is none other than a real Master. In Him, there is the spark of Truth. He is a living example of the beauty of Truth and Spirituality, and is able to guide His disciples on the right path, by drawing their minds in the right direction.

The best and the highest method of meeting God is to love the Master and to remain at His Lotus Feet. This is the first step of the ladder towards God-realization. Devotion to the Master is to love Him. It is to live according to His orders and directions – physically as well as mentally. In other words, one should give away one's heart to one's Master.

It is essential that we give our heart to our Master, for, when one gives away one's heart, one automatically gives one's whole body and puts one's entire life in the hands of the Master. If our life and our body are not ours, because they have been surrendered to the Master; then, where are our religious beliefs? They too are all merged in the Master.

This body, mind and life – and even our religion, all bind us to this world. As soon as they are surrendered at the Lotus Feet of the Master, we become detached and shall not be born again. Then nothing remains in the way of the progress of the soul towards God-realization, and our running about in this world is finished. This is only a small fraction of

the benefits resulting from devotion to the Master. Actually, the advantages are so great and so numerous that they are beyond description.

Devotion consists in fixing the form of the Master in our heart. This devotion should be similar to that of the chakor चकोर (moon-bird) for the moon. Then love is awakened in the heart of the disciple. So long as love is not of that type, the effort to create conditions for such a love should be continued. Once devotion of this high type is established in a human heart, the soul automatically starts rising upward and is able to catch hold of the Sound Current.

Those who try to listen to the Sound Current, without having true devotion for their Master, are ignorant. Because one listens to the Sound Current only by the grace and mercy of a true Master. The magnetic power of His love and our devotion attract the soul towards higher regions.

Swami Ji Maharaj says,

गुरु भक्ति बिन शब्द में पचते। सो भी मानुष मूरख जान।।
शब्द खुलेगा गुरू मेहर से। खैंचे सुरत गुरु बलवान।।

-- सार-बचन छंद बंद (8:17:28-29, पृ० 354)

If a person tries to follow the practice of listening to Shabd Dhun (Sound Current) without devotion to the Master, he is ignorant, because Shabd will be heard only by the Grace of the Master, and it is the Master alone who will pull the souls upwards.

A Gurumukh is a person who is a true devotee of his Guru. By being a Gurumukh, one is able to open the gateway for the soul to soar towards the higher regions.

Devotion to the Master is the foundation of all practices. The other methods are all branches leading from it. Love for the Master is a unique treasure. It is impossible to describe this state of devotion in cold print. A mother's love for her child is beyond human description. It binds the two together and there is no power that can break it. But love for the Master is far above the love of a mother for her child.

A lover loves his beloved very much. A glow of happiness lights up his face as soon as he sees his beloved. But the Master has a unique spiritual beauty and magnetic

power of attraction. His form radiates thousands of blissful currents of attraction which invigorate the body and the mind.

Even if one were to see the Master's face at all times, or for hundreds of times and with hundreds of eyes, the mind would never be satiated, because every time that face is seen, it is beheld with a new light and a greater radiance.

Just as the sparkling wine in a wine glass pleases the mind of a drinker, similarly, devotion to the Master gives physical strength and mental happiness to the devotee of a Guru, when he beholds the beautiful eyes of his Master.

A fish cannot live without water, because without it, it dies gasping for water. Similarly, a Gurumukh is sustained by spiritual energy as a result of diving deep into the ocean of love for the Guru. For him, nearness to the Guru is heaven, and to be away from the Guru makes him burn in the fires of hell.

A papiha पपीहा (rain-bird) is fond of rain drops, and will drink no other water. Similarly, a true devotee will not look with the same amount of love at any person other than his own Guru, because his Guru is the support of his life, and the disciple will not accept any other support. Love for the Master is sweet and magnetic, and is able to bring happiness to the disciple.

On beholding the Guru, there is an indescribable ecstasy, which is spontaneous and permeates every pore of the body. Even by having a small taste of this ecstatic state, the soul is steeped in the Master's love.

Guru's Simran सिमरन (remembrance or repetition), Dhyan ध्यान (beholding him internally or externally), and listening to the Shabd शब्द (Sound Current), as instructed by the Guru, are the three effective practices for purifying the mind.

It is true that love is not awakened, unless there is real beauty in the beloved. The nightingale will hover over fragrant flowers, but it will never go near artificial or paper

flowers. The spiritual beauty of the Guru attracts thousands of souls by awakening love in them, and takes them beyond the limits of birth and death.

The Satguru is beyond description. We, poor souls, are not worthy of worshiping Him. Even the gods and goddesses are not able to comprehend Him. Only those who have the grace of the Lord, are able to know Him.

We can offer devotion only to someone, who is superior to ourselves, and we are able to imbibe His qualities only to the extent of our love for and faith in Him. A Master is full of spiritual qualities and powers, and we shall imbibe His spiritual qualities and powers to the extent of our love and devotion to Him.

When we love someone, we imbibe his qualities and become like him. In accordance with this principle, if we worship our Master, we will imbibe all His qualities and we shall become like Him. The beauty of the beloved always enters the life and body of the lover.

Everything exerts a definite influence in its immediate vicinity. An electric bulb will spread its light up to a certain limit. Similarly, fire will spread its heat within a certain sphere. Water in tanks or pools has the effect of making things cool in its own area. In the same manner, every conscious being spreads his influence within a certain area. Spiritual currents emanating from him will affect persons coming in contact with them. This is known as the personal aura. Whoever comes near is definitely influenced.

We get warmth by sitting near a fire and cold by going in the vicinity of ice, in the same manner, if we sit near a highly evolved soul, His spiritual rays will certainly bestow His influence on us. There is, however, one necessary qualification, that is we are benefited according to the degree of our love for, faith in, and devotion to, Him.

जैसे पाहनु जल महि राखिओ भेदै नाहि तिह पानी।।
तैसे ही तुम ताहि पछानहु भगति हीन जो प्रानी।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (बिलावल म० 9, पृ० 831)

Just as water cannot enter a stone, even if the stone is immersed in it for a long time, similarly, those who are without devotion are as impregnable as the stone.

A human being is composed of physical body, mind and soul, and devotion is rendered with the help of all the three.

The physical body consists of five gross elements: ether, air, fire, water and earth. The finer elements of the senses are derived from these and consist of: hearing, touch or feeling, seeing, taste and smell.

When we sit near the Master and listen to His words with our ears or hearing faculty, that is known as "Shabd bhakti शब्द–भक्ति" (sound or hearing devotion).

When we touch the Master's feet with our hands, it is called "Sparsh bhakti स्पर्श–भक्ति" or devotion by touch. When we bow before Him and the Master places His hands over our head or embraces us, that is also touch devotion.

When we behold the Master without blinking and steadily gaze at Him, that is known as "Roop bhakti रूप–भक्ति" or form devotion.

With our tongue we repeat His Names, and also eat parshad which is bestowed by Him in His grace. That is known as "Swaad bhakti स्वाद–भक्ति" or taste devotion.

Imbibing the sweet fragrance emanating from the spiritual currents that radiate from the body of a Master is known as "Ghrana bhakti घ्राण–भक्ति"or smell devotion.

There is another type of sense devotion which is popularly known as "Pashu bhakti पशु–भक्ति"(devotion through the grosser senses). This is performed only by those who still harbour animal desires. Such people have not yet developed Vivek विवेक (discrimination). They are full of narrow-mindedness and religious bigotry, which cause them a great deal of trouble and pain. The majority of people in this world are of this type. They are deeply engrossed in personal dissensions and quarrelling, and in fighting cases in law courts.

Some of these people are known as "Guru pashu गुरु–पशु" i.e., they lack discrimination and cling stubbornly

to their beliefs. Others are called "Nara pashu नर–पशु". They are narrow-minded and dogmatic in their views and beliefs. Such people do not imbibe the truly noble impressions and qualities of their Guru. If a pitcher is kept inverted, rain water will never enter it. Such persons sometimes come under the influence of their own convictions, and even act against the instructions or wishes of their Master. This causes them trouble, and is also painful to their Master. Real devotion is done with discrimination.

Kabir says,

गुरुपसु नरपसु नारिपसु बेदपसु संसार।
मानुष सोई जानिये, जाहि बिबेक विचार।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-2 (विवेक का अंग 4, पृ० 154)

All the people in the world are either blind followers of a guru (master, guide or teacher), or of men, or of women, or of religions. But a man, in the right sense of the word, is he who exercises discrimination and caution in all matters.

The second type of devotion is mental devotion. A person's heart (antahkaran अंतःकरण) has four different attributes: chit, manas, buddhi and ahankar. Chitta चित्त is used for the reception of the Master's words. Man मन (pronounced mun) accepts those words. Buddhi बुद्धि uses discrimination in understanding and making use of those words. Ahankar अहंकार is the quality of firmness in following the words or instructions. Such practice is known as mental devotion to the Master, and it can be achieved only by concentration of the mind. The ears, eyes and the tongue are controlled and concentrated, and contact is made with the Naam and the Master. This is done by means of three practices which are known as Simran सिमरन (repetition or remembrance), Dhyan ध्यान (contemplation on the Form of the Master), and Bhajan भजन (listening to the Sound Current).

These practices are to be performed externally as well as internally. Externally, we do the Simran of the Master at all times, see the Master's Form and contemplate on it, and listen to the instructions and talks of the Master. By these

three external practices, love for the Master will increase, we will be able to come near to the Master (within) and we will be able to concentrate our attention within. The spiritual powers of the Master will enter our minds and will enable us to make our contemplation steady. Then our soul will be able to catch hold of the Sound Current and soar upwards. At the time of Initiation, a Master imparts the full details of these three practices to his disciple.

Sound, touch, form (sight), taste and smell are the five types of preliminary devotion of a lower order. Thereafter, Simran (repetition or remembrance), Dhyan (contemplation), and Bhajan (listening to the Sound Current) externally as well as internally, are the three next higher kinds of devotion.

The first stage of devotion is simple and gross. The second is finer, and the aim is to contemplate on the Form of the Master within. In this category there are eight different types of devotion. Mahatma Charan Das describes the qualities of such devotion in the following verse:

सुमिरन बंदन ध्यान और पूजा करो।
प्रभु सूँ प्रीत लगाय सुरति चरनन धरों।।
होकरि दासहिं भाव साध संगति रलो।
भक्तन की करि सेव यही मति है भलो।।
आपा अर्पन देइ धीर्ज दृढ़ता गहो।
छिमा सील संतोष दया धारे रहो।।

-- चरनदास जी की बानी भाग-1 (पृ० 25)

You should do Simran, sing His praises, contemplate and worship. You should have love for the Lord in your mind, and place your soul at His Feet. You should be humble and serve the Gurumukhs, Sadhus and Saints, and also remain in their company. It is good to serve them. Dedicate your own self with faith and firmness, and imbibe into your mind forgiveness, continence, contentment and mercy.

Remember your Master, bow to Him, contemplate on Him and worship Him. Love the Lord, and place your soul at His Feet.

Next comes spiritual devotion. This consists in the soul's contacting Naam by means of concentration at its centre (the headquarters of the soul in the body), and to remain happy in the enjoyment of Naam. This is known as "Naam Bhakti नाम–भक्ति". By this method, the soul rises above the physical and mental planes and goes to finer regions.

In ordinary language, Simran, Dhyan and Bhajan are considered to be three types of devotion; but actually they are one, practiced internally.

For devotion, it is necessary that the soul, the body and the mind should act simultaneously. If one has given his heart away, he has virtually given everything – his body, his life and everything else is dedicated to the object of his love. The attachment of the heart is real devotion, which is, in other words, nothing but intense love. If you attach your heart to the Master, that is known as Guru Bhakti. The word 'Bhakti भक्ति' (devotion) is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Bhaj भज्', which means service. So, service to the Master is also Guru Bhakti.

भाई रे दासनि दासा होइ।। गुर की सेवा गुर भगति है विरला पाए कोइ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सिरीराग म० 3, पृ० 66)

O Brother! Be the humblest of the humble. Guru Bhakti, which is service to the Master, is attained only by a very few.

People say that they believe in God, that they worship Him and also love Him. We can believe that they have faith in God and that they also worship Him, but it is not possible for everybody to love Him. True and intense love can be experienced only through another human being. For instance, we observe that a man loves his wife, but if she dies and then visits him in her astral body, he will cry out that it is a ghost and will not want to see her. The reason is very clear. She is no longer composed of the same elements and is now in her astral form, while he is in the physical or gross form.

Similarly, God is invisible and inaccessible, and man is still in his gross physical form. So at first, a human being needs a Master in the physical form, who will enable him

to rise out of the physical body (die daily), make him finer (pure spirit), and thus make him capable of loving the Lord. Guru Amar Das says,

बिनु पिआरै भगति न होवई ना सुखु होइ सरीरि।।
प्रेम पदारथु पाईऐ गुर भगती मन धीरि।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (आसा म० 3, पृ० 429)

Without loving affection, Devotional Worship is not possible, and the body cannot be at peace. The wealth of Love is obtained from the Guru; through Devotion, the mind becomes steady.

Devotion to the Master is a step towards true devotion to God.

Someone might say, perhaps, that God can manifest His beauty and consciousness to human beings by His Divine Will. Truly, this is possible; but so long as a person does not soar high and attain (at least) astral consciousness, he will not be able to understand or realize within himself the beauty, the power and the light of the Lord. If the Lord were to manifest Himself to a person, who was not so prepared, that person would be overcome with awe.

The Hindus believe in ten incarnations of God: Matsya, Kashyapa, Nrsinh, Vaman, Parashurama, Rama, Krishna, Buddha and Kalki. All these incarnations are of the god Vishnu, but devotion to and worship of these ten incarnations is confined only to Rama, Krishna and Buddha, because they incarnated as human beings. Hundreds of temples have been built in their memory. The other seven incarnations are not worshiped anywhere.

Similarly, amongst the Jains there is only one incarnation, called Tirthankara. The Christians also worship only one incarnation, named Christ. Amongst the Muslims it is said that the Lord made a human being and commanded even the angels to bow down before him and worship him.

Worship of a human being in the form of the Master is also described by the Sufis. Man is the representative of God.

The Hindus believe that a man without a Guru can never attain salvation. Mohammedans of the Sunni sect also

believe that there is no salvation without a Master. Maulana Rumi says,

चूं किह् करदी ज़ाते–मुर्शिद रा क़बूल,
हम ख़ुदा दर ज़तश आमद हम रसूल।

-- किताबुल-बैअत (पृ० 8)

When the person of the Master hast thou accepted, in His person, are included God and the Prophet.

Again, he says,

मसजिदे हस्त अंदरूने–औलिास्त, सजदागाहे–जुमला हस्त आंजा ख़ुदास्त।

-- मसनवी मौलाना रूमी (दफ़्तर 2, पृ० 293)

The true mosque is inside the beloved and noble souls of God. That is the true and real place to worship God.

मसजिदे कोरां ज़ आबो–गिल बुवद, मसजिदे साहिब–दिलां रा दिल बुवद।
अब्लहां तअज़ीमे–मसजिद मी कुनंद, अहले–दिल दर साफ़ी–ए–दिल मीरवंद।

-- मसनवी मौलाना रूमी (दफ़्तर 2, पृ० 293)

The mosque built out of water, earth and stone is for the spiritually ignorant people whose inner eyes are not open. The mosque of the lovers of God is in the heart. It is only the ignorant people who worship elsewhere. The beloved of the Lord remember Him by cleaning their minds and their hearts.

Kabir Sahib also expressed this idea in a slightly different language saying:

मन मेरा पंछी भया, उड़ि कर चढ़ा अकास।
गगन मँडल खाली पड़ा, साहिब संतों पास।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-2 (साध का अंग 36, पृ० 127)

My mind has become a bird and has flown to the sky above. It found the heaven empty, because He is ever in the hearts of His Saints.

We should consider this matter with a calm and clear mind. That is, true and intense love can be developed only for someone of one's own species. This is a proven fact and cannot change. When God wishes to accept the love and worship of human beings, He comes in the form of a human being. In reality, 'Khuda ख़ुदा' (a Persian name of God) means "one who comes himself". 'Khud ख़ुद' means self, and 'A आ' means come. The question will naturally arise, wheth-

er devotion to a Guru or Master is the worship of a finite being, rather than of the Infinite Being, who is the all-pervading Power. If one wishes to bathe in the sea, he will do so only at the seashore. The Guru is like the shore of an ocean of infinite spirituality, where one can take the bath of salvation.

To our limited understanding, the Master may appear to be finite. Actually, he is infinite. He is the medium for attaining God-realization. He is the medium for taking us from Physical to Astral, from Astral to Causal planes, and even further up – stage by stage – to the Unlimited Power (God) above, by means of his instructions and discourses.

If one were to assert that he worships and contemplates on the form of God, which is omnipresent, it can be said that, at the most, he contemplates on the form of a vacuum or of the ether. Besides, it is not visible to our sense of sight and it will not be helpful in awakening in us the currents of spirituality.

God is all-pervading. A thief steals, but the all-pervading Lord does not stop him from this evil act. The conscious power, which stops one from doing such acts is that of the Master. He teaches, guides and helps. God is omnipresent, like electricity; but electricity cannot help us, unless we make contact with it through a finite switch and thus connect ourselves with the source of the electricity. As soon as contact is made, light appears and even machines and factories are run by this power.

The relationship between beings of the same species has a great deal of power in this world for creating love and attraction. We are on the physical plane, and we can only love one who is also on this physical plane. We are human beings and we should love only a human being. We have not seen the Lord. How can we offer our love to Him? In other words, it is clear that in order to love the Lord, we must love Him through one of His manifestations. Such a man is the Guru.

A Master has two forms. Externally, he is a human being; but internally he is, in fact, God. He is in the form of

a human being outside; but he is God-in-man, or God-plus-man. He has contact with human beings on one side, and with the Lord, on the other. From this point of view, He has two aspects. One is that of a human being, and the other is that of God. His real form is Shabd. Shabd creates the physical body and dwells in it.

And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. (John 1:14)

A Master is the medium through which individuals are connected with God. In other words, Paramatma परमात्मा (God), Shabd शब्द (Sound Current or Word), and Guru गुरु (Master) are three different forms of the same Lord. If we offer devotion to Shabd in the physical form, which is the Guru, we are then immediately connected with the Lord inside. Devotion to the Guru is, in fact, true devotion to the Lord.

If we were to study the entire universe, we would see that man is at the top of creation.

अवर जोनि तेरी पनिहारी।। इसु धरती महि तेरी सिकदारी।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (आसा म० 5, पृ० 374)

The entire universe is your servant, and you are the Lord of this earth.

Human beings are endowed with the gift of intelligence and discrimination, to a far greater extent than all the other creatures in this world. All other creatures are, therefore, not worthy of our devotion. Actually, devotion to them would pull us down. The question arises, why should a man worship another man? The answer is that there is a great difference between one man and another. A Guru has assumed the form of a man, but he is not an ordinary man. Internally he is always in conscious contact with God.

There is no other method of achieving spiritual progress, except through devotion to a Guru. Without devotion to the Guru, all other actions or religious practices are fruitless. Just as one does not become wealthy by getting wealth in his dreams, similarly, one's acts, without devotion to the Guru, bear no fruit.

Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jains – nobody can achieve eternal happiness and peace of mind, without devotion to a Guru. Therefore, if one were to sacrifice one's life for the sake of obtaining devotion to the Guru, it should be considered a cheap bargain, because that is the only method of meeting the Lord.

Actually, it is not easy to meet a Master. Kabir says,

सीस दिये जो गुरु मिलें, तौ भी सस्ता जान।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (गुरुदेव का अंग 62, पृ० 6)

Consider it a cheap bargain if you are able to meet a Master, even by sacrificing your own life.

All religious scriptures and Saints have laid emphasis on the need for devotion to a Master, and maintain that this is a step towards meeting the Lord. But devotion must be steadfast. Then, other practices will be beneficial. All other practices are useless, without devotion to the Guru. The Hindu Upanishads have also described the importance of Guru worship:

यस्य देवे परा भक्तिः यथा देवे तथा गुरौ।
तस्यैते कथिता ह्यर्थाः प्रकाशन्ते महात्मनः।।

-- श्वेताश्वतरोपनिषद् (6:23)

He who has highest devotion of God; so for his Guru, just like his God, to him, who is high-minded, these teachings will be illuminating. (Shwetashwatara Upanishad)

He alone meets the Lord, who has created in his mind the highest form of devotion, and such devotion should be of the same intensity for the Guru, as it is for the Lord.

Like the Lord, a Master has a finite and an infinite aspect, and it is by devotion alone that we are able to see Him in both of these aspects. We can see the form of the Master through the eyes of our devotion. Then we shall see that the light of His eyes is spread over the entire universe. A Master may be compared to an ocean, and a disciple to a rivulet that flows into and merges itself in the ocean. Thus the disciple completely loses his identity in the ocean-like spirituality of his Master. Bhai Gurdas says,

मुरदा होइ मुरीद सो गुर गोरि समावै।।

-- भाई गुरदास (वारां गिआन रतनावली, 9:22)

A disciple should merge completely in his Guru, like a dead body going into a grave.

In the Adi Granth also, we find the statement Merge yourself into the Guru. This means that one has to forget one's own identity and become one with the Guru. Muin-ud-din Chishti says,

मरा दर दिल बग़ैर अज़ दोस्त चीज़े दर नमी गुंजद,
बख़लवत ख़ानाए–सुलतां कसे दीगर नमी गुंजद।

-- दीवाने-ग़रीब नवाज़ (पृ० 64)

Nothing can be contained in me except my Guru, just as nobody else can enter the palace of a king.

So long as we do not complete our devotion to the physical form of the Master, we shall not be able to listen to the Shabd, nor shall we be able to meet the Lord.

By devotion to the Guru, we are able to get rid of the worldly attachments. The gross attachments can be cut off only by means of Guru Bhakti गुरु–भक्ति (devotion to the Master), and the finer attachments of the mind will be sublimated by means of Naam Bhakti नाम–भक्ति (devotion to Naam or Shabd). Naam Bhakti can be obtained from no one, but a Guru. So long as we do not meet a Guru, we cannot get Naam; and so long as we do not obtain Naam, the ties or cords binding our mind to the world, cannot be cut. Christ describes Guru Bhakti in the following words by giving an example:

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches, he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me, you can do nothing.

As the father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love. (John 15:4, 5,9)

Just as a twig, when grafted to a tree, becomes one with the tree, and the life and energy of the tree become a part of the twig – in the same manner, those who have connected

themselves with the Lord, are completely one with Him. In other words, a twig that has not been grafted to a tree is separate from the tree. Accordingly, if we are not connected with the Guru, we are separate from Him. We should, therefore, "graft" ourselves onto a Guru, and the result will be that all the qualities of God will be manifested in us.

A Gurumukh is a devotee of the Lord (through devotion to his Guru). Such a devotee completely surrenders himself to his Guru and becomes one with Him in exactly the same manner, as water merges into water. He is in no way separate.

Internally, the devotee is grafted onto the Guru, and thus becomes free from death and fear. The Guru is Amrit अमृत (life-giving elixir) and a person who is immersed in Amrit can never fear death.

Guru and God are two different entities, but their Godhood is one. Similarly, the Guru and his devotee appear to be two different persons but they have one soul; that is, their souls are one, and when a devotee speaks, it is not he, but the Guru who is speaking. His eyes show the spark of the Guru's light. The Guru is always one with him. Shams-i-Tabriz very aptly describes the oneness of the Guru and His devotee in the following words:

मन तू शुदम तू मन शुदी, मन तन शुदम तू जां शुदी,
ता कस नगोयद बअद अजीं मन दीगरम तू दीगरी।

-- अमीर खुसरो (पृ० 112) में उद्धृत

I am thou; Thou art I. I am the body; thou art the life. So none can say that I am different from Thee.

Kabir Sahib expressed the same truth:

जब मैं था तब गुरु नहीं, अब गुरु है हम नाहिं।
प्रेम गली अति साँकरी, ता में दो न समाहिं।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (प्रेम का अंग 10, पृ० 46)

When 'I' was, Guru was not. Now Guru is, I am not. The lane of love is so narrow that it cannot contain two.

Saint Paul also expressed his ideas about the oneness of the devotee and the Master:

I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. (Gal. 2:20)

Hafiz spoke in a similar strain:

चुनां पुर शुद फ़ज़ाए सीना अज़ दोस्त, किह् फ़िक्रे–ख़्वेश गुमशुद अज़ ज़मीरम।

-- दीवाने-हाफ़िज़ (पृ० 329)

My heart has become so full of my Beloved that I have lost all idea in my mind of my own self.

He does not stop there, but continues:

अजज़ाए वुजूदम हमगी यार गिरिफ़्त, नामीस्त मरा बरमन ओ बाक़ी हमा ऊस्त।

-- दीवाने-हाफ़िज़ (पृ० 329)

Every cell of my body has been captured by my Beloved (Master). My condition is that I really do not exist, because everything is He, He and He.

Devotion to the Master is intense love for Him. If we love anybody, we serve him. We are prepared to sacrifice everything for him. Love knows no burden and no compulsion. A devotee gives away everything for the sake of his Beloved – his body, wealth, mind and soul; in fact, everything is surrendered at the altar of the Master. To serve the Guru is to be devoted to Him.

The Master is also equally concerned about His disciple. He wishes the disciple to make progress in all respects. Sometimes, He is angry with His disciple for his benefit, but the heart from which this seeming anger emanates contains a never-failing fountain of love for the disciple. The words may appear to be harsh, but they are saturated with love. And it is for this reason that a devotee finds even these harsh words to be sweet. A sign of Guru Bhakti is that whenever a Guru uses harsh language or is angry, the disciple takes it to be sweet and is not offended.

A devotee has the greatest love for his Master. He lives and is happy in the Darshan (beholding) of his Guru. To be able to behold the Guru (have his Darshan), bestows a unique benefit. The gestures of the Guru enthral the mind of the disciple to such an extent that he is prepared to sacrifice himself for a glimpse of them. To Majnun, Laila appeared to be the most beautiful woman on the face of this earth. Maulana Rumi says,

तवाफ़े–हाजीयां दारम बगिर्दे–यार मी गरदम,
न अख़लाके–सगां दारम न बर मुर्दार मी गरदम।
रफ़ीके–ख़िज़रम ओ हरदम लिक़ाए ख़िज़र रा जूयां,
क़दम बर जा ओ सर गरदां किह् चूँ परकार मी गरदम।

-- दीवाने-शम्स तब्रेज़ (पृ० 236)

A devotee moves around his Guru with as much reverence and love as does a pilgrim going round a mosque. His mosque is the living body of his Master. He does not worship the dead or the idols, but he worships a living being. He is the companion of his Master because at all times he is thirsty for his Darshan and, like a compass, moves around the centre of his Master.

Maulana Rumi further states:

कअबा तवाफ़ मी कुनद बर सरं–कूए यक बुते,
ईं चिह् बुत अस्त ऐ ख़ुदा ईं चिह् बला ओ आफ़ते।

-- दीवाने-शम्स तब्रेज़ (पृ० 409)

Even the Ka'ba also moves around Him. O God! What is it about a Master that even the highest places of worship are insignificant before Him.

Hafiz says,

बराहे–मैकदा उश्शाक़ रास्त दर तगो–ताज़,
हमां नियाज़ किह् हुज्जाज रा बराहे–हजाज़।

-- दीवाने-हाफ़िज़ (पृ० 236)

Those who are saturated with love for their Master go to Him with as much love and respect as do those who are going on a pilgrimage to the Ka'ba.

He continues:

आशिक़े–यारम मरा बा कुफ़्रो–बर–ईमां चिह् कार,
तिश्नाए दर्दम मरा बा वस्लो–बा–हिज्रां चिह् कार।
क़िब्ला–ओ–मिहराबे–मन अबरूए–दिलदार अस्त ओ बस,
ईं दिले–शोरीदा रा बा ईं चिह् व बा आं चिह् कार।

-- दीवाने-हाफ़िज़ (पृ० 232)

I am intensely in love with my Guru. What have I to do with religion or bigotry? I am restless in the pain of separation from Him, so much so that I have lost all consciousness of union or separation. The eye-brows of my Beloved are to me like the arch of the Ka'ba. Why should I bother about anything else?

A devotee does not consider anything in the world equal to his Guru. The beautiful gardens in paradise and the tooba (a life-giving tree in heaven), the palaces of the beautiful damsels there, cannot even approach a particle of dust from the lane of the Master. The Court of the Master is a treasure worth the entire wealth of the world, and the devotee cannot refrain from kissing the earth at the door of His house.

Bhai Nand Lal has written:

दीनो–दुनिया दर कमंदे–आं परी रुख़सारे–मा,
हर दो आलम क़ीमते–यक तारे–मूए–यारे–मा।

-- दीवाने-गोया (पृ० 10)

To a faithful devotee his Guru is his world, and he is united with Him. Both the worlds are too small a price to pay for even one hair of the Master.

Bhai Nand Lal also says,

गदाए–कूए–तुरा मैले–बादशाही नीस्त।

-- दीवाने-गोया (पृ० 18)

O My Master, even the kings of the world cannot equal a beggar at Thy door!

Devotion to the Master is Difficult

गुरु भक्ति अति कठिन है, ज्यों खाँडे की धार।
बिना साच पहुँचै नहीं, महा कठिन ब्यौहार।।
भक्ति दुहेली गुरू की, नहिं कायर का काम।
सीस उतारै हाथ से, सो लेसी सतनाम।।
जान भक्त का नित मरन, अनजाते का राज।
सर और समझै नहीं, पेट भरन से काज।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (भक्ति का अंग 3,4,22, पृ० 33-34)

Devotion to the Master, Guru Bhakti is extremely difficult. It is like walking on the edge of a sword, and is not the work of a coward. On this path one has to walk with his head on his palms (in his hands), i.e. one must destroy his ego. In Devotion, one has to efface himself completely by merging in his Beloved Master. This is to be done daily, and those who cannot do this are busy in eating, drinking and enjoying life. (Kabir)

Karma Yoga कर्म–योग (devotion through action) is achieved by means of some effort, but in devotion, one has to eliminate all other attachments, because this method is directly connected with the heart (spiritual heart centre). If the mind is conditioned accordingly, so that other attachments are eliminated, then everything is achieved.

जब लग नाता जगत का, तब लग भक्ति न होय।
नात तोड़ हरि को भजै, भक्त कहावै सोय।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (भक्ति का अंग 10, पृ० 33)

So long as we are confined to the outward forms and rituals, we cannot be true devotees. All these ties have to be removed from the mind and from the heart, in order to become a true devotee. (Kabir)

In Bhakti, one does not depend on any outward observances (religious ceremonies, etc.). All these things are artificial and showy. There is a world of difference between a true devotee and one who merely lives according to the rules of a religious order. A devotee is absorbed in the feet of his Beloved (Master), but the worldly man is influenced by worldly opinion.

True devotion does not depend on outward forms. Such devotion and love is rare in this world. Kabir has also further expressed this thought as follows:

भक्ति भेष बहु अंतरा, जैसे धरनि अकास।
भक्त लीन गुरु चरन में, भेष जगत की आस।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (भक्ति का अंग 12, पृ० 34)

There is a vast difference between a devotee and a person following outward observances, just as there is a vast difference between the earth and the sky. A devotee is happy at the feet of his Master, while the ascetic depends upon the approval of the world. (Kabir)

So long as one is attached to caste or creed, he is not a true devotee. He alone is a true devotee, who renounces all connections with caste and creed.

जहाँ भक्ति तहँ भेष नाहिं, बर्नाश्रम तहँ नाहिं।
नाम भक्ति जो प्रेम से, सो दुर्लभ जग माहिं।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (भक्ति का अंग 13, पृ० 34)

Asceticism, caste or creed do not exist in a true devotee. Those who are the devotees of Naam (Shabd, Sound Current, Word) are rare in this world. (Kabir)

Bhakti is difficult and very rare. To follow outward observances is easy and common. Bhakti is not merely an outward practice. When one is blessed with the wealth of devotion, the Master becomes a part of every cell of the body of the devotee and guides him with His grace. But such devotion, full of intense love, is achieved only by one with good karmas.

भक्ति कठिन दुर्लभ महा, भेष सुगम निज सोय।
भक्ति नियारी भेष तें, यह जानै सब कोय।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (भक्ति का अंग 14, पृ० 34)

Devotion is difficult and rare. Outward practices are easy to perform. Everybody knows that devotion is quite different from outward observances. (Kabir)

भक्ति पदारथ जब मिलै, तब गुरु होय सहाय।
प्रेम प्रीति की भक्ति जो, पूरन भाग मिलाय।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (भक्ति का अंग 15, पृ० 34)

When the treasure of devotion has been bestowed on a person, the Guru comes to his aid. Such Devotion is achieved only with very good karmas. (Kabir)

Kabir Sahib further states that it is not always possible to be born in the human form. Therefore, we should abandon the transitory pleasures of the world and be absorbed in devotion to the Guru.

कबीर गुरु की भक्ति करु, तजि बिषया रस चौज।
बार बार नहिं पाइहै, मानुष जन्म की मौज।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (भक्ति का अंग 1, पृ० 33)

O Kabir! You should show your Devotion to your Guru by discarding all the pleasures of the world, which are like poison eating into a man, because this human form cannot be obtained every time. (Kabir)

Devotion to the Master is the Path of Surrender of Self or Ego

Because the path of devotion has many advantages, a seeker of Truth is always happy and eager to follow it. But so long as a human being is not able to purify his mind of all the low desires of the senses, he cannot enjoy its fruit. If a person puts on an outward show of humility, it is of no use. If service is rendered for any selfish motive, one can receive no real benefit.

The question arises, how can we attain God, who is Himself selfless and free from all desires? In this world, people wish to become devotees, because they see others following the path and for the satisfaction of their own arrogant minds. If a person, who is under the influence of worldly desires, finds anything lacking in his devotion or in the satisfaction of his desires, he, in his ignorance, blames his Master. Kabir says,

कबीर गुरु की भक्ति का, मन में बहुत हुलास।
मन मनसा माँजै नहीं, होन चहत है दास।।
हरष बड़ाई देख करि, भक्ति करै संसार।
जब देखै कछु हीनता, औगुन धरै गवार।।
जब लगि भक्ति सकाम है, तब लगि निस्फल सेव।
कह कबीर वह क्यों मिलै, निःकामी निज देव।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (भक्ति का अंग 6,7,34, पृ० 33-44)

O Kabir! Devotion to a Guru brings unbounded happiness in the mind of a devotee, but if one does not cleanse his mind of low desires, he cannot enjoy its bliss. The people of the world follow the path of satisfaction of their own ego. People of this kind blame the object of their Devotion whenever, in their ignorance, they find any defects. So long as Devotion is not desireless, any service rendered is useless. O Kabir, how can one attain God, who is selfless and desireless?

Devotion is another name for the sacrifice of one's life (surrendering one's self). It has a strong and unique influence. Just a glimpse of the Guru's greatness before the eyes of a devotee, will make him dance with joy around his Guru.

This is the path of giving one's life, because it is only by surrendering one's self, that one can achieve devotion. This path is open to all. One, who is prepared to sacrifice himself, will get it. Mansur, while ascending the scaffold, cried out to all devotees:

चढ़ा मन्सूर सूली पर पुकारा इश्क़बाज़ों को,
ये बामे–इश्क़ का जीना है, आए जिस का जी चाहे।

Life, created out of intense Love, is here. Come hither, whoever wants to get it.

It is difficult to understand true devotion, because it is achieved without any selfish motive and by freeing one's self from all ambition. It is something for which, under the influence of love, one has to sacrifice everything – body, mind, life and all beliefs – and desire nothing in return.

Kabir says,

भक्ति भाव की रीति की, नहिं आई पहचान।
तन दे मन दे सीस दे, जग से रहे अमान।।
भक्ति प्रान तें होत है, मन दै कीजै भाव।
परमारथ परतीत में, यह तन जाव तो जाव।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (भक्ति का अंग 11, पृ० 33)

The idea of devotion is difficult to comprehend. One should give his mind and his life, and remain detached from the world. Bhakti springs from the mind, and if one wants to comprehend it, one should sacrifice one's mind. If, in searching for it, one has to give away one's body, one should not hesitate to do so.

In the mind of a devotee there is a fathomless ocean of love, and he is able to surrender everything belonging to him in this world and the next. Hafiz says,

अगर आं तुर्के–शीराज़ी बदस्त आरद दिले–मा रा,
बख़ाले–हिन्दुवश बख़्शम समरक़ंदो–बुखारा रा।

-- दीवाने-हाफ़िज़ (पृ० 30)

If my Master accepts me, then I am prepared to sacrifice this world and the next, even for the small black mole on His face.

In this world the mind of each individual is filled with thousands of ideas, but in devotion there is no such thing, for then the mind is fixed on one thing alone and will not be turned from it under any circumstances.

The sight of a true devotee becomes so keen that he sees his Beloved in every place and in everything. His thoughts, his contemplation and the intoxication of his love occupy his mind at all times, and his longing becomes intense. He loses all contact with this world and the next, because he has given himself up completely to his Beloved. How can he look at anything else, and what interest can he have in rituals, ceremonies, days of the week and things of that nature?

पढ़ाँ नमाज़ कि तैं वल्ल वेखां! मैनूं काबा भुल्ल गईओ ई।।

-- बुल्लेशाह

Shall I bow in meditation or look at you? I have lost all memory of my idol. (Bulleh Shah)

Kabir says,

जहाँ प्रेम तहँ नेम नहिं, तहाँ न बुधि ब्यौहार।
प्रेम मगन जब मन भया, तब कौन गिनै तिथि बार।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (प्रेम का अंग 27, पृ० 47)

Where there is devotion there are no rituals or intellectual discussions or ceremonies, for once the mind is absorbed in love for the Beloved, there is no time to keep track of days or nights.

What is the Object of being Devoted to a Master?

Why should we love the Master? It is done chiefly, so that we may imbibe the nature and ideals of the Master. By loving the Master, His consciousness brings light within us and we forget everything about this mundane world.

We are naturally in a state of attachment to this world, whether it be our household, our children, our friends or others. A Master has a unique magnetic power by which we are attracted to Him.

The purpose of our love for Him is that our love may be detached from all other objects and become centred around Him. If a stream of water has nine outlets, and if it were allowed to flow through only one of the outlets – all the others being closed – its pressure would be so strong that the water would pour out in a flood, even if the opening is a tiny one. When our love is detached from everything else and is

attached only to the Guru, then we are free from all the evil ties and attachments of the world, and contact God.

By loving the Guru, the disciple assumes His very form. Hafiz says,

हाफ़िज़ तू पा दर हरमे–इश्क़ निहादी,
बर दामने–ऊ दस्त ज़न ओ अज़ हमा बिगुसल।।

-- दीवाने-हाफ़िज़ (पृ० 278)

If you have entered the Palace of your Beloved, then you should catch hold of Him with strong hands. In other words, you should sever your thoughts from everything else.

A devotee always remains absorbed in the love of his Guru, who is the manifestation of God. Persons given to rituals and ceremonies say their prayers a number of times daily, but a devotee remembers his Guru at all times, with every breath of his life. He will never forget his Guru – who is the manifestation of God – and always remembers with his mind and with his body the sweet recollections of his Guru's actions. A Guru is the giver of spiritual life to His disciples, and sustains everybody.

Devotion to the Guru is, in fact, devotion to the True Lord. If one were to call it worship of man, then such man-worship was founded by God Himself. He commanded the angels to bow down before man when He created him. A Master is a human being, but He is a complete person, and without Him, a disciple can have no success in this life or hereafter.

The currents of love emanating from the heart of a devotee strike against the heart of the Master, draw power from it, and return to the heart of the disciple with a double force. In this manner, the spiritual powers of the Master enter the heart of the disciple and it appears to him that the Master has become one with him, and he himself feels one with the Master. Once the disciple is in communion with the Guru, all the gates of bliss and happiness are open to him.

Such a devotee need not do anything else, because the Master enters his mind with all His powers. The disciple then

gets a feeling of Guru in disciple and disciple in Guru, so much so that the disciple becomes Guru-man or Guru plus man. Because a Guru is God incarnated as man, the disciple also becomes a God-man. In the Bible, it says,

> *These great children of Light, who manifest the Light, who themselves are Light; being worshiped, they become one, as it were, with us and we become one with them. (Bible, Ephesians 5: 7-14)*

Devotion is an essential and most important part of the way of Spirituality. We should detach ourselves from all worldly ties and go in search of a Guru. By His grace only, can we be given the gift of Shabd. We should devote ourselves to Him. Kabir says,

> भक्ति दान मोहिं दीजिये, गुरु देवन के देव।
> और नहीं कछु चाहिये, निसु दिन तेरी सेव।।
>
> -- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (बिनती का अंग 29, पृ० 105)

> *O my Master! Thou who art the Lord of Lords, bestow upon me the gift of Devotion! I do not want anything except to be in your service day in and day out.*

All Scriptures, sages, saints and mahatmas have laid great emphasis on devotion to a Master, because without devotion, all our spiritual practices take us only half-way and do not bring proper results.

What Type of Devotion should be Rendered

The object of devotion is to create attachment and attraction for each other in two people. It has many qualities. If a person comes to a Master, after properly adorning himself with intense love, as a woman goes to her lover in fine clothes and ornaments, then he will surely receive love from Him. The Bhagavatam says that devotion is of nine different kinds नवधा भक्ति:

1. Listening to the Guru's words with rapt attention and fixing these in one's mind.
2. Singing hymns and engaging in spiritual talk.
3. Simran (repetition and remembrance).
4. Physical service.

5. Worship.
6. Prayer (for guidance and grace).
7. Humility.
8. Feeling love and reverence for the Master.
9. Complete surrender.
These nine practices lead to the path of true devotion.

1. Listening to the Guru's words with rapt attention and fixing these in one's mind.

This is to hear discourses in praise of God and to fix these thoughts in one's mind. We have not seen God, therefore the first step towards devotion to Him is to listen to His praises. By listening to these, a feeling of love is created within our minds. Considerable importance is therefore given to this practice.

कोटि करन दीजहि प्रभ प्रीतम हरि गुण सुणीअहि अबिनासी राम।।
-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सूही म० 5, पृ० 781)

Please bless me, O Beloved God, with millions of ears, with which I may hear the glorious praises of Ram, the Imperishable Lord.

स्रवणी सुणउ बिमल जसु सुआमी।। एका ओट तजउ बिखु कामी।।
-- आदि ग्रन्थ (मारू म० 5, पृ० 1080)

With my ears, I listen to the pure praises of my Lord and Master. With the Support of the One Lord, I have abandoned corruption, sexuality and desire.

थिति पाई चूके भ्रम गवन।। सुनि नानक हरि हरि जसु स्रवन।।
-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी सुखमनी म० 5, पृ० 287)

Listening with one's ears to the Praises of the Lord, Har, Har, stability is attained; doubt and wandering cease, O Nanak.

This is the first step towards the path of devotion. So long as thoughts about God do not enter one's mind, the foundation of love cannot be laid.

जो तू पिय की प्यारिनी, अपना करि ले री।।
कलह कल्पना मेटि कै, चरनों चित दे री।।
-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (लव का अंग 15, पृ० 37)

If you wish to become a beloved of the Lord, then make Him your own; throw out all anxieties as well as quibblings, and fix your mind in His Lotus Feet.

How can one make one's Beloved one's own? This may be explained by an example: A newly married girl talks about her husband with her friends. Her object is to fix the love of the beloved in her mind by remembering him, and his form is always before her mind's eye. In her mind, she sings praises of her spouse. In this manner she increases her remembrance of him and fixes it most firmly in her heart. She also looks at him with a fixed gaze of love and devotion. In this manner, the love for her beloved becomes so strong that it is always in her mind, even when she is occupied with her household duties. Thus strong currents of love for her beloved surge through her mind. She becomes one with him, and no difference remains between the two. In this manner she imbibes his nature.

God is one. We are all His brides, and one who is loved by Him, is really exalted. Devotion is an all-pervading quality, which spreads in all directions. In order to imbibe it, a disciple should first listen to talks about Him from Saints and Mahatmas. He should sit in the company of people, where such discourses take place. He should not sully his mind by listening to any other talk, because God will not enter the temple of our body, so long as it is not pure.

When you visit your elder or your superior, you look at him with respect and attention, and try to prevent any other thought from entering your mind at that time. But when you sit in devotion in remembrance of God, how many thoughts and ideas – even of an impure nature – enter your mind? How great is the injustice you do unto Him!

2. Singing hymns and engaging in spiritual talk.

As soon as the devotee is able to fix the thoughts of God in his mind by listening to His praises, he will begin to sing them, because Out of the abundance of his heart a man speaks. Gurbani says,

बोलहु जसु जिहबा दिनु राति।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी सुखमनी म० 5, पृ० 286)

Chant His Praises with your tongue, day and night.

3. Simran (repetition and remembrance).

Together with this, one should repeat and remember His Name at all times, even while sitting, walking or travelling. The Sikh Scriptures lay considerable emphasis on Simran (repetition and remembrance), because it is by Simran alone that one is able to fix one's love for the object of his love in the mind.

सिमरउ सिमरि सिमरि सुखु पावउ।। कलि कलेस तन माहि मिटावउ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी सुखमनी म० 5, पृ० 262)

Meditate, meditate, meditate in remembrance of Him, and find peace – worry and anguish shall be dispelled from your body.

सिमरहु एकु निरंजन सोऊ।। जा ते बिरथा जात न कोऊ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (मारू म० 5, पृ० 1004)

Meditate in remembrance on the One Immaculate Lord. No one is turned away from Him empty-handed.

बिनु सिमरन दिनु रैनि बृथा बिहाइ।। मेघ बिना जिउ खेती जाइ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी सुखमनी म० 5, पृ० 269)

Without the remembrance of the Lord, day and night pass in vain – like the crop which withers without rain.

4. Physical service.

One should listen, one should do the Kirtan (sing His praises) and one should engage himself in Simran. While doing all these, one should also perform physical service at the feet of the Master, and should at the same time fix His form in his mind. In other words, one should perform service to the Master outwardly and devotional exercises inwardly for the attainment of Naam.

5. Worship.

One should do all types of worship, because worship and service rendered with love and humility cleanse the mind.

6. Prayer (for guidance and grace).

One should always remain in an attitude of prayer and ask for grace and guidance.

7. **Humility, 8. Feeling love and reverence for the Master, & 9. Complete surrender.**

All the above six practices should be performed with humility and devotion. The devotee loves the Master as he would love a friend, respects Him as he would respect a father, worships Him as a bride worships her husband, and sacrifices everything for Him.

'Slave' expression:

केसा का करि बीजना संत चउरु ढुलावउ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सूही म० 5, पृ० 745)

One should make a fan of his hair and should serve the Saints with it.

पाणी पखा पीसु दास कै तब होहि निहालु।।
राज मिलख सिकदारीआ अगनी महि जालु।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (बिलावल म० 5, पृ० 811)

I feel happy and contented with Seva, such as to fetch water, to pull the rope of a fan, or to grind corn for the Saints. All high positions such as kingship, the possession of wealth or property and positions of power, are worth nothing except being thrown into fire.

मो कउ कीजै दासु दास दासन को हरि दइआ धारि जगंनाथा।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (जैतसरी म० 4, पृ० 696)

Make me the slave of the slave of the slaves of the Lord; bless me with Your Mercy, O Lord of the Universe.

'Beloved' expression:

साजन तेरे चरन की होइ रहा सद धूरि।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (मारू म० 1, पृ० 989)

O my Friend, I shall forever remain the dust of Your feet.

आदि मधि जो अति निबाहै।। सो साजनु मेरा मनु चाहै।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी म० 5, पृ० 240)

That Friend, who is with me in the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of my life is a welcome Friend of mine.

साजनड़ा मेरा साजनड़ा निकटि खलोइअड़ा मेरा साजनड़ा।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (रामकली म० 5, पृ० 924)

Beloved, O my Beloved. Standing so near to me is my Beloved, the Lord my Beloved. With my eyes, I have seen the Lord, my Beloved!

'Father' expression:

हरि के भगत सदा सुखवासी।। बाल सुभाइ अतीत उदासी।।
अनिक रंग करहि बहु भाती जिउ पिता पूतु लाडाइदा।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (मारू सोलहे म० 5, पृ० 1076)

The devotees of the Lord dwell forever in peace. With a child-like, innocent nature, they remain detached, turning away from the world. They enjoy various pleasures in many ways; God caresses them, just as a father caressing his son.

जिउ बालकु पिता ऊपरि करे बहु माणु।। बुलाइदा बोलै गुर कै भाणि।।
गुझी छंनी नाही बात।। गुरु नानकु तुठा कीनी दाति।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (आसा म० 5, पृ० 396)

Just as a child places so much faith in its father, I speak as it pleases the Guru to have me speak. This is not a hidden secret; Guru Nanak, greatly pleased, has bestowed this gift.

'Feminine' expression:

सुणि नाह पिआरे इक बेनंती मेरी।।
तू निज घरि वसिअड़ा हउ रुलि भसमै ढेरी।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (तुखारी म० 1, पृ० 1111)

O my Lord, please listen to my one supplication. You dwell in the home of the self deep within, while I roll around like a dust-ball.

इआणी बाली किआ करे जा धन कंत न भावै।।
करण पलाह करे बहुतेरे सा धन महलु न पावै।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (तिलंग म० 1, पृ० 722)

What should a poor lass do if she is not able to win the favours of her Lord? She tries hard, but does not find a place in His court.

अजु न सती कंत सिउ अंगु मुड़े मुड़ि जाइ।।
जाइ पुछहु डोहागणी तुम किउ रैणि विहाइ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सलोक सेख फ़रीद, पृ० 1379)

I was not able to commune with my Lord tonight, and my entire body aches. Go and ask the deserted bride, how she passes her night!

कवन गुन प्रानपति मिलउ मेरी माई।।
रूप हीन बुधि बल हीनी मोहि परदेसनि दूर ते आई।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी पूरबी म० 5, पृ० 204)

By what virtues can I meet the Lord, O my mother? I have no beauty, understanding or strength; I am a stranger, from far away.

धन भाइ भगती देखि प्रीतम काम क्रोधु निवारिआ।।
नानक मुंध नवेल सुंदरि देखि पिरु साधारिआ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (बिलावल दखनी म० 1, पृ० 843)

My devotion and love for the Lord have helped me in giving up all passionate desires and feelings of anger. O Nanak, the young, innocent bride is so beautiful; seeing her Husband Lord, she is comforted.

मीठी आगिआ पिर की लागी।। सउकनि घर की कंति तिआगी।।
प्रिअ सोहागनि सीगारि करी।। मन मेरे की तपति हरी।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (आसा म० 5, पृ० 394)

The Lord's commands are sweet, and my negative desires and feelings have vanished. I am now the beloved of my Lord, and my mind is rid of all worries.

We have to enter the temple of our body for the worship of the Lord, rid the mind of all superficial and external tendencies, and offer flowers in the form of one-pointed attention by surrendering body, mind and heart at the sacred Feet of the Lord.

The contemplation of a devotee is always fixed on the form of the Guru, and he thinks about his Master day and night. His attention is centred on Him uninterruptedly. When he dies, the soul will go where the Guru is. It cannot go anywhere else. The following quotations is from the Gita:

अन्तकाले च मामेव स्मरन्मुक्ता कलेवरम्।
यः प्रयाति स मद्भावं याति नास्त्यत्र संशयः।।
यं यं वापि स्मरन्भावं त्यजत्यन्ते कलेवरम्।
तं तमेवैति कौन्तेय सदा तद्भावभावितः।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (8:5-6)

And one who at the last hour remembers me only, and then departs, leaving the body, enters into me. Of that there is no doubt.

Whatever form a man continually contemplates, the same he remembers at the hour of death, and to that very form he goes.

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु।
मामेवैष्यसि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियो ऽसि मे।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (18:65)

On me, fix thy mind, to me bring thy Devotion, to me offer thy sacrifice, to me make thy obeisance, then to me indeed shalt thou come. Solemn is my promise to thee, for thou art dear to me.

Those devotees, who have fixed their attention on the Guru, will never go empty-handed; they are free from all troubles and pains, as well as from the clutches of the Negative Power. When a person concentrates the attention of his body and mind and speech, in other words, when he concentrates his soul at the eye centre, then his inner eye is opened and he is able to see the Lord inside, whose lustre radiates there permanently like that of the sun. It is therefore necessary that the internal eye be opened, in order to enable a person to have communion with the Lord.

Then he sings His praises, sees Him at all times, and bows before Him with his mind and with his life. He sees Him inside with the inner eye, and does not look for Him outside. Even if the physical eyes are open, they remain open, but do not see (at that time), because all the attention is centred within. In other words, all outward activity is stopped and he is conscious of his Beloved within himself.

Kabir Sahib says,

नैनों अंतर आव तू, नैन झाँपि तोहि लेवँ।
ना मैं देखौं और को, ना तोहि देखन देवँ।।

- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (पतिब्रता का अंग 4, पृ० 28)

O my Beloved! Enter my eyes and I shall immediately close them, for then I shall not see anybody else, nor shall I permit you to look at anyone else.

सोऊँ तो सुपने मिलूँ, जागूँ तो मन माहिं।
लोचन राते सुभ घड़ी, बिसरत कबहूँ नाहिं।।

-- सद्गुरु कबीर का साखी ग्रन्थ (लगनी को अंग 25, पृ० 162)

When I am awake I see you. When I sleep I feel you inside. At all times I think of you, and I do not forget you for a moment.

Kabir further describes the proper type of Bhakti:

नैनों की करि कोठरी, पुतली पलँग बिछाय।
पलकों की चिक डारि कै, पिय को लिया रिझाय।।

- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (प्रेम का अंग 50, पृ० 49)

We should place a beautiful bed in the pupil of the eye, which should serve as a room. The eyelid should serve as a door, and the Beloved should come and lie in this bed.

प्रेम पाँवरी पहिरि कै, धीरज काजर देइ।
सील सिंदूर भराइ कै, यों पिय का सुख लेइ।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (प्रेम का अंग 28, पृ० 47)

Then my dress should be Prem (Love), and the collyrium should be of Shanti (peace and quiet). Put the vermilion of courage on my head and then only can I enjoy the happiness of being with my Beloved.

पिय का मारग कठिन है, खाँडा हो जैसा।
नाचन निकसी बापुरी, फिर घूँघट कैसा।
पिय का मारग सुगम है, तेरा चलन अनेड़।
नाच न जानै बापुरी, कहै आँगना टेढ़।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (प्रेम का अंग 52,53 पृ० 49)

The path of Love is easy but the difficulty lies in us. We do not know how to dance and in our ignorance we find fault with the floor. The path of the Beloved is very difficult – just like the edge of a sword – and once you come out to dance, there is no question of feeling shy.

All Saints have described Bhakti as being comparable to a wife's love for her beloved husband. Even Narad Rishi described Bhakti in the same strain. Every devotee has love for God in the same manner as a woman has love for her husband. We can describe, only by means of an example, the happiness which comes to a person when he is in communion with God, by saying that it is similar to the love between man and woman. The Brahadaranyaka Upanishad tells us:

तद्वा अस्यैतदतिच्छन्दा अपहतपान्माभयँरूपं।
तद्यथा प्रियया स्त्रिया संपरिष्वक्तो न बाह्यं किंचन वेद नान्तरमेव मेवायं
पुरुषः प्राज्ञेनात्मना संपरिष्वक्तो न बाह्यं किंचन वेद
नान्तरं तद्वा अस्यैतदाप्तकाममात्मकाममकामँरूपँशोकान्तरम्।

-- बृहदारण्यकोपनिषद् (4:3:21)

As a lover and a beloved meet and are happy in the intoxication of their union and feel that they are one and are at that time absolutely unaware of happenings in the world beyond their physical bodies; in the same manner, when a devotee communes with God, he feels much greater happiness and goes far above pain and desires, because this happiness is the consummation of all desires.

This analogy is found not only in the Hindu Scriptures, but also in many other books. Cardinal Newman says,

If the soul desires to obtain the height of bliss, it is essential that it becomes like a bride yearning for her beloved.

Christ also referred to God as a Bridegroom in one of His parables, and those who looked for the Bridegroom were referred to in that parable as brides. Many saints amongst the Christians have referred to themselves as the brides of Christ, and describing the inner experiences of their mind, they have given the idea of a spiritual marriage.

St. John supplicated Christ in the following words:

Make me your bride. So long as you do not press me to your side, I can have no pleasure from anything in this world.

When St. Francis saw the resplendent form of Christ in his state of super-consciousness, he cried out:

O my beloved Lord! I am now your wife.

St. Catherine often said that she was betrothed to Christ. She also wore a ring and said that it was the sign of love from her beloved Christ.

What is the meaning of love for the Lord? The currents of devotion have to be concentrated inside. This is real devotion. Nothing else.

What are the Practices by which we can be Successful in Devotion?

The first condition is to have only one object in mind, for devotion should be offered to one only. The rays of the sun are able to burn a piece of cloth, if they are concentrated through a magnifying glass, but if they are spread over a large area, they are unable to do so. Similarly, if the currents

of devotion coming from one's mind are concentrated on one's beloved, then the fruit of devotion increases and one can act in any manner one desires.

So long as devotion is not one-pointed, the idea of duality will be on one's mind, and consequently, there will be no concentration. Therefore, for true devotion, one-pointedness is most essential. In other words, the object of devotion should be one.

A woman who has one husband is "suhagin सुहागिन" (happily married). She is able to obtain real happiness out of marriage. Contact and communion with one person or one object only gives purity of heart and also results in a joyful life. Intimate contact with more than one, is impure and leads to disputes and other troubles. This is also true in connection with the spiritual life. Kabir brings this idea home to us in the following verse:

पतिवरता बिभिचारिनी, एक मंदिर में बास।
वह रँग–राती पीव के, यह घर घर फिरै उदास।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (पतिब्रता का अंग 17, पृ० 30)

A chaste and faithful wife is dyed in the hue of her beloved. In other words, she is the queen of the home, whereas the other type moves from place to place and has no goal.

पतिवरता को सुख घना, जा के पति है एक।
मन मैली विभिचारिनी, ता के खसम अनेक।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (पतिब्रता का अंग 1, पृ० 28)

A faithful wife who has only one husband is very happy; but a woman who has many is foul of mind and body. Both types are to be found in the human form.

Therefore, in the Sikh and other Scriptures, one will find emphasis placed on the fact that the object of devotion should be one:

एको जपि एको सालाहि।। एकु सिमरि एको मन आहि।।
एकस के गुन गाउ अनंत।। मनि तनि जापि एक भगवंत।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी सुखमनी म० 5, पृ० 289)

Meditate on the One, and worship the One. In your mind remember the One, and yearn for the One. Sing the endless Glorious Praises of the One. With mind and body, meditate on the One Lord God.

We should think of only one object and we should repeat the Name (the five Holy Names) of only one object (the Lord). That object should rest firmly in the seat of our mind and we should sing His praises at all times and remember Him with concentrated attention.

In devotion, it is considered sinful to give place in one's mind to thoughts of love for more than one object, because that brings no results. We should not give our heart to anyone other than the object of our love, because if we do that, we will not have peace of mind.

The second essential condition is Satsang सत्संग (true association). We should stay in the company of persons, who have devotion fully established in their minds. A melon near another melon will take on its colour. If we are in the company of Saints, we shall also be dyed in the hue of their devotion. In other words, our devotion will become strong.

महा पवित्र साध का संगु।। जिसु भेटत लागै प्रभ रंगु।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (आसा म० 5, पृ० 392)

Association with a Saint is exalted and pure. Whoever remains in such company develops the state of communion with God.

संत सजन मन मित्र से लाइनि प्रभ सिउ रंगु जीउ।।
तिन्ह सिउ प्रीति न तुटई कबहु न होवै भंगु जीउ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सूही म० 5, पृ० 760)

Devotees whose minds have made friends with Saints are so much dyed in the hue of God's love that their love will never waver.

कबीर चंदन का बिरवा भला बेड्हिओ ढाक पलास।।
ओइ भी चंदनु होइ रहे बसे जु चंदन पासि।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सलोक भगत कबीर, पृ० 1365)

O Kabir! It is better if dhak (a bitter shrub) is grown near a sandal tree, because once it is placed near sandalwood it will imbibe its fragrance. (Kabir)

Devotion is a gift which is bestowed on devotees. When we enjoy this boon, we are fully saturated with the colour of devotion. But this can be achieved only by the grace of the Lord.

Association with Saints is association with God. Their grace and kindness is the grace of God, because God is manifest in the Saints, and the Saints are fully immersed in God.

हरि का सेवकु सो हरि जेहा।। भेदु न जाणहु माणस देहा।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (मारू सोलहे म० 5, पृ० 1076)

The devotee of the Lord is the same as the Lord. There is no difference between the two, even if one of them should be found in human form.

In the Bhagavatam, Krishna says,

साधव इति। किं बहुना साधवः मह्यं मम हृदयं मद्धृदयानुवृत्तिहृदयाः साधव इत्यर्थः। तथा साधूनां हृदयं अहं साधु हृदयानुवृत्तिहृदयोऽहमित्यर्थः। ते साधवः मत् मत्तः अन्यत् न जानन्ति।

-- श्रीमद्भागवतम् (9:4:68)

Saints are my heart, and I am their heart. They do not know anything other than me, and I do not know anything other than them.

We should avoid bad company. Wealth and lust are two difficult obstacles, which cause destruction if one is engrossed in them. By intimate contact with bad company one becomes lost. Likewise, we should not associate with persons, whose behaviour turns our minds away from our object of devotion, because association with them will lead us astray, will make us arrogant, and will tempt us into many other vices.

Even if you have many good qualities, you should lead a life of humility and consider those qualities as a gift from God, because God loves the humble. Remember this well in your heart and do not enter into unnecessary disputes or critical discussions, because such discussions lead nowhere. They may be compared to churning water.

The path of devotion is also the path of action. Soami Ji Maharaj says,

यह करनी का भेद है, नाहिं बुद्धि विचार।
बुद्धि छोड़ करनी करो, तो पावो कुछ सार।।

-- सार-बचन छंद बंद (24:1:148, पृ० 207)

This Devotion is a path of action and not of intellect. Therefore, do not talk but practice Devotion, for then you will achieve something.

बादु बिबादु काहू सिउ न कीजै।। रसना राम रसाइनु पीजै।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (भैरों भगत नामदेव, पृ० 1164)

Do not engage in any arguments or debates with anyone. With your tongue, savour the Lord's sublime essence. (Namdev)

The third essential condition is a proper diet. Our food should be sattvik (that which produces tranquillity and pure thoughts). This includes rice, wheat, pulses, milk and curd. Food conditions our mind, so our ideas will have the same qualities as the type of food we eat. If we take rajasik food (that which produces restlessness and anger), like meat, fat, and so forth, the mind will become restless. But if we take tamasik food (that which produces sluggishness), like stale food, fish, wine, and other heavy pungent thing, we shall be prone to laziness. Consider the entire world as having issued from the one God, and therefore do not harm or injure any body's mind by your talk or action.

The study of scriptures, maintaining good character, the practice of simran, attending satsang, the habit of non-violence, kindness, purity of body and mind, faith, prayer, seeing God in everything – all these factors help us in our devotion to Him. One should forget himself and everything else, while engrossed in love for the Lord. One should lead a life in accordance with the edicts of his religion; then one makes progress towards the object of his devotion; otherwise, one reverts to idle pursuits.

How can Devotion be Achieved?

- By God's Grace.

He holds the Treasure of Devotion.

तूं आपे सचा सिरजनहारा।। भगती भरे तेरे भंडारा।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (माझ म० 4, पृ० 130)

Thou art the true Creator, and Thy treasure is full of Devotion.

The gift of devotion is in the hands of God. In other words, He Himself makes it possible for us to be His devotees. He cuts asunder all the ties binding His devotees to the world and makes them free.

इकना आपि बुझाइओनु गुरमुखि हरि गिआनु।।
भगति खजाना बखसिओनु हरि नामु निधानु।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सूही की वार सलोक म० 1, पृ० 786)

He Himself bestows on His Gurumukhs (those devoted to the Guru or Master) the gift of spiritual knowledge, and places in their hands the treasure of Devotion, which is the name of Hari (God).

It is only by the grace of the Lord that it is possible for human beings to perceive God. They alone attain Him who are devoted to Him with their body and their mind. They are always happy in that state and remain satisfied. For this reason, the writings of wise and noble men put emphasis on devotion. In the Gita, Krishna says,

मय्येव मन आधत्स्व मयि बुद्धिं निवेशय।
निवसिष्यसि मय्येव अत ऊर्ध्वं न संशयः।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (12:8)

Put your mind in me. Also fix your intellect in me. Then you will come within.

God loves His devotees more than anyone else. The Gita further states:

ये तु धर्म्यामृतमिदं यथोक्तं पर्युपासते।
श्रद्दधाना मत्परमा भक्तास्ते ऽतीव में प्रियाः।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (12:20)

He who follows this imperishable path of devotional service and who completely engages himself with faith, making Me the Supreme Goal, is very, very dear to Me.

The highest action and the highest quality in human life is devotion. If one does not practice it, his life is wasted.

We cannot attain communion with God by our own efforts. However, if we are blessed with the grace of God, we can have communion with Him. He is beyond the reach of physical, intellectual and even spiritual effort alone. Only those, on whom God has bestowed His grace, are successful in attaining communion with Him. In the Katho Upanishad and Mundaka Upanishad we find:

नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन।
यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्यस्तस्यैष आत्मा विवृणुते तनूँ स्वाम्।।

-- कठोपनिषद् (1:2:23) तथा मुण्डकोपनिषद् (3:2:3)

This âtman is not to be attained by a study of the Vedas, nor by intelligence, nor by much hearing, but the âtman can be attained, only by him who seeks to know it. To him, this âtman reveals its true nature.

यस्य देवे परा भक्तिः यथा देवे तथा गुरौ।
तस्यैते कथिता ह्यार्थाः प्रकाशन्ते महात्मनः।।
प्रकाशन्ते महात्मन इति।।

-- श्वेताश्वतरोपनिषद् (6:23)

These truths, when taught, shine forth only in that high-souled one who has Supreme Devotion to God, and an equal degree of devotion to the spiritual teacher. They shine forth in that high-souled one only.

In other Upanishads (the philosophical and mystical parts of the Vedas), communion with God is stated to be dependent on one's surrender to Him. If we have His grace, He attracts us to Himself within, and we become restless to meet Him. It is beyond human power alone to attain this state.

- By the Grace of a Master,

The path of devotion is a difficult one. It is achieved only through a Master and by those on whom God has bestowed His grace. Then only are their minds inclined towards devotion to Him. Even angels are yearning for devotion to Him, but it cannot be obtained without a Master. We cannot become devotees merely by reading Holy Scriptures and other books.

इसु भगती नो सुरि नर मुनि जन लोचदे विणु सतिगुर पाई न जाइ।।
पंडित पड़दे जोतिकी तिन बूझ न पाइ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (आसा म० 3, पृ० 425)

The angels, humans and silent sages are yearning for Devotion to the Lord, but it can be attained only through a Sat Guru. The learned try to find Him in their studies, but they do not find Him.

Only through the teachings or bachans (words) of a Guru, is one capable of becoming a true devotee. No other method can accomplish this, because the treasure of

devotion is obtained only by service to the Master. All other practices are external and lead us outward, hence they are not capable of producing devotion in us. The internal fires of passion cannot be subdued without the grace of the Master.

अंतरि अगनि न गुर बिनु बूझै बाहरि पूअर तापै।।
गुर सेवा बिनु भगति न होवी किउ करि चीनसि आपै।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (मारू म० 1, पृ० 1013)

The fire burning within us cannot be extinguished without a Guru. Even the outer fire of worldly desires and passions is very strong. Without service to the Master, Devotion is not possible. How can anyone, by himself, know the Lord?

A Master is actually an ocean full of surging waves of devotion. He grants it to those devotees, on whom his grace falls.

सागर भगति भंडार हरि पूरे सतिगुर पासि।।
सतिगुरु तुठा खोलि देइ मुखि गुरमुखि हरि परगासि।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (मारू म० 4, पृ० 996)

The undulating Ocean of Devotion to God rests with the Perfect True Guru. If Sat Guru is pleased, he opens the gateway to attainment of communion with God.

A person attaches himself to devotion, only if a Master, who himself is free from the shackles of birth and death, gives him the gift of devotion, frees him from the cycle of birth and death, and puts him in communion with God.

जनम मरण दुहहू महि नाही जन परउपकारी आए।।
जीअ दानु दे भगती लाइनि हरि सिउ लैनि मिलाए।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सूही म० 5, पृ० 749)

Masters are free from the shackles of birth and death. They come into this world to bestow grace on others. They give us the gift of life, bestow on us the boon of Devotion and thus put us in actual communion with Him (God).

- Naam Bhakti (Devotion to Naam, Shabd or Sound Current).

Sat Guru is the keeper of the treasure of Hari Naam हरि–नाम, another name for devotion to Naam or Shabd, and he is

capable of implanting this devotion firmly in the minds of his devotees.

हम हरि राखे सतिगुरू मिलाइआ।। अनदिनु भगति हरि नामु दृडाइआ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी म० 3, पृ० 230)

The Lord has saved me; I have met the True Guru. Night and day, He has implanted Devotional Worship of the Lord's Name in me.

बिनु सतिगुर भगति न होवई नामि न लगै पिआरु।।

जन नानक नामु अराधिआ गुर कै हेति पिआरि।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सलोक वारां ते वधीक म० 3, पृ० 1417)

Without Sat Guru we cannot have Devotion nor can we attain Naam. O Nanak, whoever practices Naam, he is dear to Sat Guru.

In the Sikh Scriptures, the practice of Shabd Dhun शब्द–धुन (listening to the Sound Current or Word) is called devotion. True devotion is love for Guru Shabd गुरु–शब्द, by means of which a person fixes the Lord in his mind. Devotion to Shabd is dear to God. We cannot have true devotion by running about in the world. Devotion can be achieved only by engrossing ourselves completely in Shabd.

सची भगति गुर सबद पिआरि।। अपना पिरु राखिआ सदा उरि धारि।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी गुआरेरी म० 3, पृ० 158)

True Devotion is devotion to Shabd. In other words, it is love for Guru Shabd, by means of which a devotee fixes the Name of God in his heart.

गुरमुखि भगति जितु सहज धुनि उपजै बिनु भगती मैलु न जाए।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी म० 3, पृ० 245)

Devotion to Guru is the practice by which Sahaj Dhun (Sound Current) is attained. Without such Devotion, it is not possible to remove the coverings of dirt from one's mind.

By means of Shabd and by adorning herself with it, the soul completely surrenders herself – like a wife to her husband – and thereby, attains communion with God.

Adi Granth again says,

हरि का नामु किनै विरलै जाता।। पूरे गुर कै सबदि पछाता।।

अनदिनु भगति करे दिनु राती सहजे ही सुखु पावणिआ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (माझ म० 3, पृ० 127)

Hari's Name is known to very few. It can be known only through Shabd, with the guidance of a Guru. A person who so devotes himself completely, day and night, attains permanent peace and happiness in the state of Sahaj.

Devotion is the term given to the practice of attaching one's self to Naam and Truth. Naam is going on day and night, and by saturating ourselves fully with its colour, we cannot be dyed in any other colour.

साचि रते भगत इक रंगी दूजा रंगु न कोई।।
नानक जिस कउ मसतकि लिखिआ तिसु सचु परापति होई।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सूही म० 3, पृ० 769)

Those who are dyed in the colour of Sach (Truth) do not take any other colour on their minds or souls. O Nanak, he alone obtains the True Lord, who has such pre-ordained destiny written upon his forehead.

While praising devotion, it should also be mentioned that by means of devotion, one is able to learn the practice of 'dying while living.'

एहा भगति जनु जीवत मरै।। गुर परसादी भवजलु तरै।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (आसा म० 3, पृ० 365)

It is by Devotion alone that we learn dying while living, but we achieve this with the grace of a Guru and are thus able to cross the ocean of life.

जो किछु कीओ सोई भल मानै ऐसी भगति कमानी।।
मित्र सत्र सभ एक समाने जोग जुगति नीसानी।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गूजरी म० 5, पृ० 496)

That Devotion is true in which whatever is ordained by the Lord is accepted with equanimity. All friends and foes are considered by such a devotee as sons of the same Father; this is the sign of the Way of Yoga.

In other words, to one who submissively follows the commandments of the Lord, whatever happens is good. Such a condition of mind is true devotion. Friend and foe are considered equal. This is the sign of one's greatness.

Intellectual people try to realize God by means of the intellect, but they fail because they rely on books and Scriptures alone. Ascetics of the different religious orders remain

superficial in their ideas and do not go deep into the Truth. Therefore, all these persons are deprived of salvation. The people of the whole world are running a mad race hither and thither, without devotion and Shabd practice.

पड़ि पड़ि पंडित मोनी थाके भेखी मुकति न पाई।।
नानक बिनु भगती जगु बउराना सचै सबदि मिलाई।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (आसा म० 3, पृ० 440)

The Pandits, the religious scholars, and the silent sages have grown weary reading and studying continually; by wearing religious robes, liberation is not obtained. O Nanak, without Devotional Worship, the world has gone insane; through the True Shabd, one meets the Lord.

True devotion can be achieved only through a Guru. By devotion, one can listen to the Sound Current within oneself, by means of which ego is destroyed and the devotee attains happiness forever and meets the Lord.

सची भगति सतिगुर ते होवै सची हिरदै बाणी।।
सतिगुरु सेवे सदा सुखु पाए हउमै सबदि समाणी।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सोरठ म० 3, पृ० 602)

True Devotion can be achieved with the guidance of a Master, because the true Sound Current is then fixed in one's heart. By serving the Sat Guru one attains eternal happiness, and by burning his ego, merges into Shabd (the true form of the Guru).

The practice of Shabd is true devotion, because by means of this we are able to join ourselves with the Truth, and the Name of God is imprinted in our minds permanently.

पूरै सबदि भगति सुहाई।। अंतरि सुखु तेरै मनि भाई।।
मनु तनु सची भगती राता सचे सिउ चितु लाइआ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (मारू म० 3, पृ० 1068)

By means of True Shabd my devotion is fruitful and I feel happiness in my mind. My mind and my body are fixed in true Devotion day and night, and my heart is in communion with theLord.

मेरे मन हरि का नामु धिआइ।।
साची भगति ता थीऐ जा हरि वसै मनि आइ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सिरीराग म० 3, पृ० 35)

O my mind, meditate on the Name of the Lord. The Devotional Worship is performed only when the Lord comes to dwell in the mind.

Who achieves Bhakti?

Devotion to God is unique and can be achieved only by rare Gurumukhs, because a Gurumukh realizes the treasure of devotion. But knowledge of how to obtain this treasure, can be obtained only from a Sat Guru, as the Sat Guru is actually the keeper of the treasure of devotion.

गुरमति पाई वडी वडिआई सचै सबदि रसु पीजै।।
नानक हरि की भगति निराली गुरमुखि विरलै कीजै।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (वडहंस म० 3, पृ० 568)

Under Guru's Instructions, one is blessed with glorious greatness; one drinks in the essence of the True Word. O Nanak, devotional worship of the Lord is wonderful, but only a few Gurumukhs perform it.

भगति खजाना गुरमुखि जाता सतिगुरि बूझि बुझाई।।
संतहु गुरमुखि देइ वडिआई।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (रामकली म० 3, पृ० 909)

The Treasure of Devotional Worship is revealed to the Gurumukh; the True Guru has inspired me with this understanding. O Saints, the Gurumkh is blessed with glorious greatness.

Bhakti - Devotion is not Idleness

Bhakti does not teach us to remain idle, because a devotee works, and all his actions are surrendered in devotion to God. In other words, he is not concerned with reward. We cannot be free from actions, but we should perform our worldly duties in order to keep this Hari Mandir हरि–मंदिर – temple of God (human body) – in proper condition. By this method, the Lotus Feet of the Lord will be imprinted in our hearts and we shall always sing His praises.

घटि वसहि चरणारबिंद रसना जपै गुपाल।।
नानक सो प्रभु सिमरीऐ तिसु देही कउ पालि।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (बिहागड़ा की वार म० 5, पृ० 554)

The Lotus Feet of the Lord are in my heart. The Name of God is on my tongue. O Nanak, meditate in remembrance of God, and nurture this body.

गुण महि गुणी समाए जिसु आपि बुझाए लाहा भगति सैसारे।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (वडहंस म० 3, पृ० 570)

When one's virtues merge with the virtues of the Lord, one comes to understand one's own self. One earns the profit of Devotional Worship in this world.

जिस नो आपि मिलाए सो बूझै भगति भाइ भउ जाई हे।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (मारू म० 3, पृ० 1046)

He alone truly understands, whom the Lord unites with Himself; through loving Devotional Worship, fear is dispelled.

The religious customs and rites that produce faith and devotion in us are useful, and we should follow them. Jami says,

मीकुनी जामी गुम अंदर इश्क़े–इस्मो–रस्मे–ख़्वेश।
आफ़रीं बादा बरीं रस्मे किह् पैदा करदाए।

-- कुल्लियाते-जामी (पृ० 358)

Lose your name and your religious customs in Devotion, for the only custom that is recommended is that by which the idea of Devotion is produced in us.

The Signs of Bhakti

The true sign of devotion is the singing of such praise of the Lord, as does not interfere with the concentration of the soul. The singing of such praise refreshes our remembrance of Him and keeps alive the current of devotion in our minds at all times.

Dancing in ecstatic devotion to the Lord is not devotion, because by such dancing the attention of the mind is deflected. For true devotion, it is necessary for one to have "Virah विरह" (longing and restlessness to meet the Beloved).

If one is arrogant or greedy in devotion, that devotion is the lowest or tamasik form of bhakti तामसिक भक्ति. If the idea of self-praise or fame enters one's mind, the devotion is known as rajasik bhakti राजसिक भक्ति. But if all desires are eliminated and we offer our devotion as part of our natural and innate duty, it is called sattvik bhakti सात्त्विक भक्ति.

The real or true devotion is beyond these three gunas गुण (qualities). It is pure. It is without desire, is dedicated entirely to contemplation of the Lord, and will manifest itself through a surge of emotions from tear-laden eyes. A devotee

of such a pure type is always happy at the Lotus Feet of the Lord. He has no desires and does not care for worldly pleasures, nor do the comforts of heaven have any attraction for him. Even the idea of salvation cannot remove his attention from the Lotus Feet of the Lord.

राजु न चाहउ मुकति न चाहउ मनि प्रीति चरन कमलारे।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (देवगंधारी म० 5, पृ० 534)

I do not want a kingdom, nor do I want salvation. I want only love for Thy Lotus Feet!

A devotee of this kind is always absorbed in remembrance of the Lord. To him God is very dear, and he is also very dear to God. But his devotion is not blind faith. He is fully conscious of the presence of the Lord.

In the beginning, devotion starts by singing praises of the Lord. Then gradually it is transformed either completely or to a great extent into pure devotion, which is performed with concentrated mind and body. The Gita states:

सततं कीर्तयन्तो मां यतन्तश्च द्ढव्रताः।
नमस्यन्तश्च मां भक्त्या नित्ययुक्ता उपासते।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (8:14)

I am easy to obtain for one who remembers Me without deviation, because of his constant engagement in Devotional Service, i.e. the Lord is always obtained through Pure Bhakti. (Gita)

Narad described this devotion by saying that the inner feelings of a person, who is successful in his devotion, are of such a nature that he thinks himself to be a tool, and the object of his devotion as the user of the tool. He thinks himself to be a cart, and the Lord is the one who sits on it and guides it.

काठ की पुतरी कहा करै बपुरी खिलावनहारो जानै।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी म० 5, पृ० 206)

What can a poor puppet do? The Master Puppeteer knows everything.

When devotion is fully settled in one's heart, then all worldly ties or attachments are automatically cut off and worldly pleasures become insipid.

Devotion is not a Physical Sentiment

Devotion is a type of love, which comes from the soul and includes currents of respect and veneration. In such a state of love, one tries to provide comfort and convenience for the object of his devotion. He is prepared to suffer all types of inconveniences, and is happy, only when the object of his devotion is pleased and in comfort. For his Beloved, he sacrifices his body, his mind, his wealth, his beauty, his intellect and even his life. All these are surrendered at the feet of the Lord as the material of worship. In other words, he eliminates his ego completely.

On the other hand, physical sentiment or love always aims at the lover's own happiness. In other words, he makes the object of his love an instrument for his own comfort and enjoyment.

Time for Devotional Practice

God has created this body with its worldly attachments and worldly desires. But in this body, we can sow the seed of Hari Bhakti हरि–भक्ति (devotion to the Lord), and all times are suitable for this purpose. Day and night both are good for this purpose. If we only plan to practice devotion and waste all of our time in planning, then no time would remain for devotion.

जे वेला वीचारीऐ ता कितु वेला भगति होइ।।
अनदिनु नामे रतिआ सचे सची सोइ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सिरीराग म० 3, पृ० 35)

If we start thinking about the time for Devotion, then no time remains for devotion itself. He alone is a true devotee who remains in devotion day and night.

The Time of Elixir, which is in the early morning hours, is, however, considered to be the most appropriate time for this purpose, because the seed of devotion to God, sown at such a time, is never wasted.

हरि धनु रतनु जवेहरु माणकु हरि धनै नालि अंमृत वेलै वतै हरि भगती हरि लिव लाई।।
हरि धनु अंमृत वेले वतै का बीजिआ भगत खाइ खरचि रहे निखुटै नाही।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सूही म० 4, पृ० 734)

The Lord Hari's wealth is like jewels, gems and rubies. During the ambrosial hours of the morning, the Lord's devotees lovingly centre their attention on the Lord. They plant the seed of the Lord's wealth in the ambrosial hours; they eat it, and expend it; yet it remains unexhausted.

The Path of Devotion is open to All

God is love. He is not bound by caste, creed or nationality. Everyone, whether man or woman, is entitled to enter the Path of Devotion. This path is open to all. The following quotations are from the Ninth Discourse in the Gita:

अपि चेत्सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक्।
साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यग्व्यसितो हि सः।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (9:30)

A sinner, howsoever deeply fallen, if he turns to me with undivided Devotion, must indeed be counted a saint; for he has a settled resolve (to sin no more). The undivided Devotion subdues both his passions and his evil deeds.

क्षिप्रं भवति धर्मात्मा शश्वच्छान्तिं निगच्छति।
कौन्तेय प्रतिजानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (9:31)

For soon he becomes righteous and wins everlasting peace; know ye for a certainty that my bhakta (devotee) never perishes.

मां हि पार्थ व्यपाश्रित्य येऽपि स्युः पापयोनयः।
स्त्रियो वैश्यास्तथा शूद्रास्तेऽपि यान्ति परां गतिम्।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (9:32)

For finding refuge in me, even those born of sin and of low caste, shall reach the Supreme Goal.

In this way, the Bhagavatam states that the Path of Devotion is for everybody. The lowliest of the low can become pure and clean by devotion to Him. The only requisites are faith and one-pointed devotion, which have the power to connect our soul with the Lord.

मक्त्याहमेकया ग्राह्यः श्रद्धयाऽऽत्मा प्रियः सताम्।
भक्तिः पुनाति मन्निष्ठा श्वपाकानपि सम्भवात्।।

-- श्रीमद्भागवतम् (11:14:21)

One obtains Me by single-minded devotion with faith in the Supreme Soul, the object of love of the devotees. Devotional service directed at Me will even purify someone who has eaten dogs.

One, who does not possess devotion and faith, may be of a very high caste or even of a royal family, yet he is much lower than a person of a poor family and low caste who possesses devotion and faith. Narad says,

नास्ति तेषु जातिविद्यारूपकुलधनक्रियादिभेदः।। यतस्तदीयाः।।

-- नारद भक्ति सूत्र (72-73)

Devotees of the Lord are not distinguished by their birth, knowledge, beautiful appearance, high family status, wealth or even religious rites or rituals, because all true devotees are near and dear to the Lord. They are conscious of God inside as well as outside of themselves, and they are always happy in His company.

Shandilya Rishi says,

आनिन्द्ययोन्यधिक्रियते पारम्पर्यात् सामान्यवत्।

-- शाण्डिल्य भक्ति सूत्र (78)

Members of all castes and creeds, even if they are of a very low order, are entitled to tread the Path of Devotion. Such are the teachings of noble persons.

Amongst ancient orthodox Hindus, the right of spiritual knowledge and action was not given to everybody. For instance, reading or reciting the Vedas was forbidden to members of the lowest caste. There are no restrictions barring anyone from the Path of Devotion.

जति पाँति पूछै न कोई। हरि कहँ भजै सो हरि का होई।।

-- कबीर ग्रन्थावली (पृ० 293)

Nobody will question you about your caste or your creed. He who devotes himself to the Lord is of the Lord.

The only aim on this path is to have communion with the Lord and to achieve salvation. Ramanuja said in very emphatic language, that worship of the Lord is the equal right of every one, and that devotion frees the mind from all sectarian ties. Ramananda also spoke against caste and creed, saying: Nobody should ask a person about his caste or creed, because whoever worships Him, belongs to Him.

Guru Ramdas also preached devotion, without regard for caste or creed, and gave his teachings to everybody, whether man or woman.

नीच जाति हरि जपतिआ उतम पदवी पाइ।।
पूछहु बिदर दासी सुतै किसनु उतरिआ घरि जिसु जाइ।।
हरि की अकथ कथा सुनहु जन भाई जितु सहसा दूख भूख सभ लहि जाई।।
रविदासु चमारु उसतति करे हरि कीरति निमख इक गाइ।।
पतित जाति उतमु भइआ चारि वरन पए पगि आइ।।
नामदेअ प्रीति लगी हरि सेती लोकु छीपा कहै बुलाइ।।
खत्री ब्राहमण पिठि दे छोडे हरि नामदेउ लीआ मुखि लाई।।
जितने भगत हरि सेवका मुखि अठसठि तीरथ तिन तिलकु कढाई।।
जनु नानकु तिन कउ अनदिनु परसे जे कृपा करे हरि राई।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सूही म० 4, पृ० 733)

If a person of low caste worships the Lord, he becomes high.
Go and ask Vidur, a low caste person, into whose hut the Lord Himself went.
O my brothers, listen to the unwritten song of the Lord, because by so doing the appetites of the mind and body will disappear.
Ravi Das, a poor cobbler, sang to the glory of the Lord.
By so doing, this fallen man became noble, and all high-caste people touched his feet.
Namdev was devoted to the Lord. Although people called him a calico printer, Yet, members of the highest caste raised him high, because from his lips came the Name of Hari in pure devotion.
Of all devotees, even if they have the tilak on their foreheads and have visited the sixty-eight places of pilgrimage, O Nanak, only those are happy who are engaged, by His grace, in remembrance of the Lord.

Devotion is Superior to and Easier than all Religious Ceremonies and Rituals

Devotion is superior to outward observances, the path of knowledge and yogic practices. By knowledge and by religious observances, one develops a touch of arrogance. In devotion, one becomes submissive and develops the quality of humility. It is for this reason, that knowledge and outward observances cannot attract the grace of God. Those who are

humble, surrender themselves completely, and rely on the grace and mercy of the Lord. They attract His grace towards them. The love for the Lord is thus awakened in their hearts.

Compared to the bonds of outward observances, the Path of Devotion is easier, because this path does not need learning, physical strength, wealth or fame. Only faith in the mercy of God, a pure and simple nature like that of a child, together with the contemplation of God are the essential factors. This path can be followed alike by young and old, men and women, the healthy and unhealthy, the high and the low; in fact, it is open to everybody. And on this path one has not so much fear of falling away from it, as is the case with the other practices. Devotion is superior to all practices. The Gita says,

तपस्विभ्यो ऽधिको योगी ज्ञानिभ्यो ऽपि मतो ऽधिकः।
कर्मिभ्यश्चधिको योगी तस्माद्योगी भवर्जुन।।
योगिनामपि सर्वेषां मद्गतेनान्तरात्मना।
श्रद्धावान्भजते यो मां स मे युक्ततमो मतः।।

-- श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (6:46-47)

The yogin is deemed higher than the man of austerities; he is deemed also higher than the man of knowledge; higher is he than the man engrossed in ritual.

And among all yogins, he, who worships me with faith in his inmost self all rapt in me, is deemed by me to be the best yogin.

Therefore, persons, who follow the Path of Devotion are superior to those engaged in yogic practices, outward observances or the path of knowledge.

Devotion, knowledge and yoga are methods of meeting the Lord. The difference between them can be explained by an example: Suppose a king has a consort and two servants. Whenever any person wishes to see the king, the servants stand at his door and wait for his call, but the consort goes freely into the king's room. Devotion may be likened to the king's consort, while knowledge, outward observances and yogic practices are like servants. These methods cannot by any means be compared to devotion. Goswami Tulsi Das

has very clearly given a comparison of Bhakti भक्ति (devotion) with Gyan ज्ञान (knowledge). He says,

जे असि भगति जानि परिहरहीं। केवल ज्ञान हेतु श्रम करहीं।।
ते जड़ कामधेनु गृहँ त्यागी। खोजत आकु फिरहिं पय लागी।।

-- श्रीरामचरितमानस (7:114:1)

Those who, even after knowing the glory of Devotion, discard it, and only make effort to acquire knowledge, they are like those who discard the wish-giving cow, Kamadhenu, tied at the house of a fool, and instead, search for milk in the Madaar or Aak (Calotropis gigantea) tree (whose milk is poisonous).

भोजन करिअ तृपिति हित लागी। जिमि सो असन पचवै जठरागी।।
असि हरि भगति सुगम सुखदाई। को अस मूढ़ न जाहि सोहाई।।

-- श्रीरामचरितमानस (7:118:5)

Food is imbibed for one's satisfaction, but the vital heat in the stomach automatically digests it. Similarly, who would be such a fool as to discard the easily accessible and ecstasy giving Devotion of the Lord.

In other words, Knowledge is very difficult, but Devotion is easier. And a devotee is always happy, because in his path there are no obstacles.

The ultimate fruit of all spiritual practices is devotion with love, Prema-Bhakti प्रेमा–भक्ति. Those who try to follow the path of spirituality with their intellect, find many obstacles in their way and remain very much below the heights attained by a devotee. Hafiz says,

ज़नाबे–इश्क़ रा दरगह बसे बाला तर अज़ अक़्ल अस्त,
कसे आँ आस्तां बोसद किह् जां दर आस्तीं दराद।

-- दीवाने-हाफ़िज़ (पृ० 213)

The sill of the door of Devotion is far above that of Knowledge and Intellect, but only he can kiss it who comes prepared to surrender himself completely for its sake.

God is in the hands of devotees. There is no other method, except devotion.

ना तू आवहि वसि बहुतु घिणावणे।। ना तू आवहि वसि बेद पड़ावणे।।
ना तू आवहि वसि तीरथि नाईऐ।। ना तू आवहि वस धरती धाईऐ।।

ना तू आवहि वसि कितै सिआणपै।। ना तू आवहि वसि बहुता दानु दे।।
सभु को तेरै वसि अगम अगोचरा।। तू भगता कै वसि भगता ताणु तेरा।।
-- आदि ग्रन्थ (रामकली की वार म० 5, पृ० 962)

One gains You not, O God, by despising (the world); nor, if one reads out the Vedas to the others; nor, if one bathes at the pilgrim-stations; nor, if one roams the whole world through; nor, yea, by being knowledgeable and clever; nor, if one gives away more and more in charity, for everyone is under Your Sway, O Unfathomable, Unperceivable God! But, You are in the hands of Your devotees, and they lean on You alone.

Obstacles in the Path of Devotion

Lust, wealth, lack of faith and talking about enemies create obstacles in the Path of Devotion. Talking about or even listening to discussions about sex topics arouses a feeling of passion. Similarly, love songs and bad company become hurdles. One should avoid these things. Men and women should therefore remain aloof from each other.

Talking about wealth creates a feeling of greed. Listening to talk about the wealthy position of others or dwelling on the subject, also creates a desire to get rich and naturally leads one away from the Path of Devotion.

Atheists are those, who do not believe in the existence of God. By associating with them, doubt or lack of faith is created in one's mind and this becomes the cause of one's downfall, for the foundation of devotion is pure and true faith.

By listening to talk about one's enemies a feeling of anger is produced in the mind, and that is also an obstacle in the Path of Devotion, because love and anger cannot blend.

Of all these obstacles, the worst one is pride in one's own wealth, power, offspring, knowledge, intellect, caste, creed, family status, good character, beauty, and so forth.

The best ornament that adorns a devotee is humility. On the Path of Devotion one has to discard all useless ideas and attach his mind to the thought of his Beloved alone. Only then, comes the grace and mercy of the Lord.

Another obstacle in the way of devotion is hypocrisy. To pretend to be virtuous, religious, a devotee, an ascetic or a truthful man – all these are forms of hypocrisy.

Just as a clean cloth takes a dye easily, a pure heart imbibes the Light of God more easily. On this path, one has to become as innocent as a child, because only the innocent enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Verily I say unto you, except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. (Matt. 18:3)

तुम मात पिता हम बारिक तेरे।। तुमरी कृपा महि सूख घनेरे।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी सुखमनी म० 5, पृ० 268)

You are our father and mother, and we are Your children. In Your Mercy, there are plenty of joys!

It is also necessary to abstain from stealing, telling lies, arrogance and so on, because these are all bad habits.

Fruits of Devotion

By devotion, all the desires of a person are sublimated, resulting in contentment; and he is therefore freed from the cycle of birth and death. His mind has no desires, because all his desires are fulfilled in remembrance of God. He loves everybody, since he loves God and thinks all as His sons.

Hatred and enmity vanish by means of Bhakti. One remains intoxicated in devotion to the Lord, because the elixir-like sweetness of devotion keeps him indifferent to all pleasures and pains of the world. On meeting the Lord, one gets everything and therefore does not run after the world. He remains happy at the Lotus Feet of his Lord.

A devotee absorbed in love for his Lord is happy day and night, and does not desire anything else. He is full of love for his Beloved, for whom he has no thought of selfish love. Nothing else is needed by such a devotee.

One, who tastes the fruit of devotion, is fully satisfied, and for him the fruits of all other practices are tasteless.

हरि बिनु कछू न लागई भगतन कउ मीठा।।
आन सुआद सभि फीकिआ करि निरनउ डीठा।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (जैतसरी म० 5, पृ० 708)

Nothing appears sweet to a devotee except the Name of the Lord. I have discovered that all tastes are insipid compared to His remembrance.

A devotee sees the Lord here, there and everywhere. He sacrifices himself to the Lord, and all his actions and religious observances are surrendered at His Feet. The goal of his life is confined to devotion to the Lord only.

By devotion all sins and bad actions are annihilated and the mind becomes pure. Actions devoid of faith and devotion, whether religious observances or austerities, do not purify one's mind. Devotion is a natural tendency of the mind. By means of devotion, all sins are washed away, because it is the sustaining factor of purity.

By devotion to the Lord, the entire attention of a devotee is dyed in remembrance of the Lord – sitting, rising, coming, going, sleeping, walking, eating, drinking – all these actions are surrendered to Him. As a result, the devotee is freed from the shackles of the world.

So long as devotion is not awakened in our minds, we cannot be freed from the cycle of birth and death. A devotee ultimately merges in the Lord. His ego, which is the cause of his remaining in the cycle of birth and death, is destroyed, as his thoughts of "mine" or "I-ness" vanish. In this manner, his cycle of coming and going is finished.

A devotee is coloured in the dye of devotion. If a person is absorbed in some particular thing, he becomes one with it. If he devotes himself to Naam Bhakti नाम–भक्ति (the practice of Shabd, the Sound Current or Word), he achieves a superior kind of devotion to the Lord. Devotion frees one from fear, pleasure and pain, and brings instead bliss, peace of mind, satisfaction of the heart and contentment.

By becoming a selfless devotee, one becomes detached permanently from the world. Devotion removes one from the dark labyrinth of the world and makes him pure. Even the Negative Power does not come near a devotee. Ego is destroyed, mind and body become pure, doubts are

removed, and the mind is fully imbued with devotion. The devotee crosses all the three gunas and goes into Sahaj सहज, the fourth stage.

One who has been asleep for so many births is awakened, his cycle of birth and death is finished. He crosses the ocean of this world, and achieves salvation and Sahaj. In other words, he is able to reach his own Home, which is the highest region of spirituality. Such devotees are able to meet the Lord, and the soul is merged in the Truth, is decorated like a bride, goes into the Court of the Lord and is honoured there. m

12

INTENSE LONGING (*Virah* विरह)

Virah has various stages. The first is the recollection of one's Beloved, accompanied by longing and contemplation. This condition of recollection and contemplation becomes so strong that a devotee's attention is completely diverted to the form of his Beloved, which always remains fixed in his mind's eye. The Beloved becomes the sustainer of his life, and he will not leave Him.

The two are merged into one, and a state of complete calmness and tranquillity is achieved. In this state, the devotee loses his own self and sees his Beloved everywhere. A heart, that has true love for the Beloved, is naturally happy and feels a current of ecstasy, when it sees or meets Him.

Virah is the name of the active state of love. A lover, who possesses Virah, does not wish to lose sight of the Beloved even for a moment. Whenever he is not able to see Him or happens to be separated from Him, a feeling of pain stabs his heart and he feels an inner anguish. But the taste of this pain of separation is in no way less sweet than that of being with the Beloved. This is called Virah.

Why is intense longing created? Simply because our soul has not been able to succeed in getting what it actually longs for. Just as the chatrik चात्रिक (rain bird) becomes restless, when it does not get the nectar-like rain drops; just as the chakor चकोर (moon bird) is disappointed, when it is not able to see the full moon; just as a mother becomes restless at the time of separation from her son, or a wife from her husband; just as a fish is in anguish without water – in a similar manner – our soul is intensely restless because of its separation from the Lord.

This intense longing always surges up like a wave or current in the heart and refreshes the mind with remembrance of Him. As a result, the heart's agony is assuaged by continuous remembrance and contemplation of the Lord. This creates a feeling of happiness. It is a stepping-stone, over which a seeker has to tread, in order to attain communion with the Lord.

In order to meet the Beloved, intense longing comes first, in the same manner as flowers bud and bloom on a fruit tree, before it can bear fruit. Where there are no flowers, there can be no fruit.

Similarly, where there is no Virah (intense longing), there can be no meeting with the Beloved. In other words, this longing is a pre-requisite for meeting the Lord.

In the state of intense longing, every cell of the body becomes restless with the memory of the Beloved, and without meeting Him or seeing Him the heart is not appeased. We seek out those, whom we call saints and sadhus because they have achieved communion with the Lord, and we beseech them to help us in meeting the Lord. Inside of us, there is an urge to meet Him, and we cannot live without Him.

मै मेलहु संत मेरा हरि प्रभु सजणु मै मनि तनि भुख लगाईआ जीउ।।
हउ रहि न सकउ बिनु देखे मेरे प्रीतम मै अंतरि बिरहु हरि लाईआ जीउ।।
-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी माझ म० 4, पृ० 174)

O my Master, help me to meet my Hari (God). My mind and body are hungry to meet Him. I cannot live without seeing my Lord, and there is an intense and restless longing in me.

The history of the lives of all the Saints reveals the intensity of their desire and longing for the Lord. The people of the world eat, drink and are happy with the worldly pleasures, and sleep soundly at night. But a lover weeps and sighs, and is wide awake the whole night long in his longing to meet the Beloved. Such a soul pines to meet the Lord and cries out:

O, will it ever be possible for these eyes to see Him!

When separated from Him, ornaments for the body, tasty food or fine clothes have no attraction. Guru Nanak very beautifully draws the picture of the soul in such a state:

मुंध रैणि दुहेलड़ीआ जीउ नीद न आवै।।
सा धन दुबलीआ जीउ पिर कै हावै।।
धन थीई दुबिल कंत हावै केव नैणी देखए।।
सीगार मिठ रस भोग भोजन सभु झूठु कितै न लेखए।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी पूरबी म० 1, पृ० 242)

The soul-bride, separated from her lord, cannot sleep at night. She becomes feeble while sighing for her beloved, and she weeps in longing for him. Adornments for her body, sweet and palatable food, and other pleasures do not interest her.

Again, Guru Nanak says,

वैदु बुलाइआ वैदगी पकड़ि ढंढ़ोले बांह।।
भोला वैदु न जाणई करक कलेजे माहि।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (मलार की वार म० 1, पृ० 1279)

On seeing my condition, a physician was called. He felt my pulse and found nothing. And how could he find anything, because my heart was suffering the agony of separation!

Guru Nanak further says,

मै रोवंदी सभु जगु रुना रुंनडे वणहु पंखेरू।।
इकु न रुना मेरे तन का बिरहा जिनि हउ पिरहु विछोड़ी।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (वडहंस म० 1, पृ० 558)

O God, on hearing me cry, the whole world has begun to weep. The trees and birds are crying, but the sense of separateness in me has not wept, on account of which, I have been separated from You.

Guru Amar Das also describes the condition of a devotee's soul in the Adi Granth:

मिलु मेरे प्रीतमा जीउ तुधु बिनु खरी निमाणी।।
मै नैणी नीद न आवै जीउ भावै अंनु न पाणी।।
पाणी अंनु न भावै मरीऐ हावै बिनु पिर किउ सुखु पाईऐ।।
गुर आगै करउ बिनंती जे गुर भावै जिउ मिलै तिवै मिलाईऐ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी म० 3, पृ० 244)

O my Lord, come and meet me! Without You I am helpless. Sleep will not come to my eyes nor can I take any interest in food or drink. How can I find any happiness without my Lord, and how can eating and drinking give me any solace! I therefore beseech my Master, in all humility, that if it pleases him, he should permit me to meet my Lord.

Guru Ram Das says,

हउ खिनु पलु रहि न सकउ बिनु प्रीतम जिउ बिनु अमलै अमली मरि गईआ।।
जिन कउ पिआस होइ प्रभ केरी तिन्ह अवरु न भावै बिनु हरि को दुईआ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (बिलावल म० 4, पृ० 836)

I cannot live without my Beloved even for a moment. Just as a person addicted to drugs and intoxicants dies if they are withheld, similarly I am dying without You. Those who thirst for God, do not love any other. Other than the Lord, there is none other at all.

Guru Ram Das further states,

रोमि रोमि मनि तन इक बेदन मै प्रभ देखे बिनु नीद न पईआ।।
बैदक नाटक देखि भुलाने मै हिरदै मनि तनि प्रेम लगईआ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (बिलावल म० 4, पृ० 836)

Without the Lord, every cell of my mind and body is in a state of anguish, and there is no sleep in my eyes. I am suffering in mind and body from the pain of separation. The poor doctors cannot diagnose my malady. Within my heart, mind and body, I feel the pain of Divine Love.

The Tenth Sikh Guru also described very beautifully the state of intense longing. He says,

मित्र पिआरे नूं हालु मुरीदां दा कहिणा।।
तुधु बिनू रोगु रजाईआं दा ओढण नाग निवासा दा रहणा।।
सूल सुराही खंजरु पिआला बिंग कसाईआं दा सहणा।।
यारड़े दा सानूं सथरु चंगा भट्ठ खेड़िया दा रहणा।।

-- दसम ग्रन्थ (ख़्याल पातशाही 10, 1/1/6)

Please convey the feelings of all of the disciples to our dear Master, and say that without Him even living in comfort is like living with the snakes. That we are drinking pain and anguish out of cups covered with thorns, and are suffering blows like those from a butcher's axe. O, our Beloved, it is better for us to lie on our death beds in virah (intense longing) than to live in worldly comfort which (without You) is as painful as a burning oven. (Dasamgranth.org p.710)

Kabir Sahib also describes this condition in the same vein. He says,

हँस हँस कंत न पाइआ, जिन पाया तिन रोय।
हाँसी खेले पिय मिलैं, तो कौन दुहागिनि होय।।

सुखिया सब संसार है, भावै औ सोवै।
दुखिया दास कबीर है, जागै औ रोवै।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (विरह का अंग 19, 20 पृ० 39)

No one has been united to his Beloved through mirth. Whoever has attained communion with Him has done so after shedding many tears. If it were possible to meet the Beloved while laughing and in a state of comfort, why should one suffer the anguish of separation? The people of the world are happy. They eat and sleep. Kabir alone is unhappy. He is awake and is weeping.

Kabir Sahib further describes, as follows, the feelings of pain, anguish and restlessness suffered by a devotee separated from the Lord:

कबीर हँसना दूर करु, रोने से करु चीत।
बिन रोये क्यों पाइये, प्रेम पियारा मीत।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (विरह का अंग 16, पृ० 39)

O Kabir, keep away from the life of pleasure and attach yourself to crying, for without it how can you find your Beloved!

बिरहनी देइ सँदेसरा, सुनी हमारी पीव।
जल बिन मच्छी क्यों जिये, पानी में का जीव।।
बिरह तेज तन में तपै, अंग सबै अकुलाय।
घट सूना जिव पीव में, मौत ढूँढ़ि फिर जाय।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (विरह का अंग 1,2, पृ० 37-38)

The lover calls out: O my Beloved, please listen to my message. How can a fish live without water, for its very life depends on water! The fire of separation is burning my body and my whole being is restless. The soul has left the body and is completely merged in her Lord. The angel of death comes, but does not find the soul and goes away.

Kabir, the lover cries out:

कबीर सुन्दरि यों कहै, सुनिये कंत सुजान।
बेगि मिलो तुम आइ के, नही तो तजिहौं प्रान।।
कै बिरहिन को मीच दे, कै आपा दिखलाय।
आठ पहर का दाझना, मो पै सहा न जाय।।
बिरह कमंडल कर लिये, बैरागी दो नैन।
माँगै दरस मधूकरी, छके रहैं दिन रैन।।

येहि तन का दिवला करौं, बाती मेलौं जीव।
लोहू सींचौं तेल ज्यों, कब मुख देखौं पीव।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (विरह का अंग 12-15, पृ० 38-39)

'O my Lord, listen to my message. Come at once and meet me, otherwise I shall give up my life!
Either bring death to my body if it is to be separated from Thee, or give me your Darshan (show Thyself to me). I am unable to bear this pain of separation any longer.
My two eyes have become cups, waiting for the Elixir of your Darshan (a vision) of Thee.'
Your devotees who yearn for You are detached from this world, and the hope of meeting You is the sustenance of their life. These eyes weep in agony without ceasing in remembrance of You.
By this crying there is some little solace, but these eyes are yearning for the sweetness of Your Darshan. We have made a lamp of this body and a wick of this life, in which blood is being burned instead of oil. O my Lord, will it ever be possible to see You!

Kabir continues:

नैन हमारे बावरे, छिन छिन लोड़ैं तुज्झ।
ना तम मिलो न मैं सुखी, ऐसी बेदन मुज्झ।।
माँस गया पिंजर रहा, ताकन लागे काग।
साहिब अजहुँ न आइया, मंद हमारे भाग।।
बिरहा सेती मति अड़ै, रे मन मोर सुजान।
हाड़ मास सब खात है, जीवन करै मसान।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (विरह का अंग 55-56, पृ० 42)

My eyes, like those of a mad man, are searching for you every minute. You do not meet me. I am not happy, and am ever in a state of pain and tension.
My body is emaciated. Now I am only a skeleton of bones. It is my misfortune that even now my Lord has not come to me.
This separation has eaten up all my bones and my body, and has made me dead while still living.

बिरह प्रबल दल साजि के, घेर लियो मोहिं आय।
नहिं मारै छाड़ै नहीं, तलफ तलफ जिय जाय।।
पिय बिन जिय तरसत रहै, पल पल बिरह सताय।
रैन दिवस मोहिं कल नहीं, सिसक सिसक जिय जाय।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (विरह का अंग 22-24, पृ० 39)

Like a powerful army, this separation has surrounded me. It does not permit me to die nor does it allow me to live, and my life is slowly ebbing away in anguish. I am suffering Virah in the absence of my Lord, and separation is troubling me every minute. Day and night I have no rest, and my breath is gradually growing less and less.

Sheikh Farid asks a question of a nightingale:

काली कोइल तू कित गुन काली।।

O nightingale, what qualities have made you black?

Then he himself replies:

अपने प्रीतम के हउ बिरहै जाली।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सूही सेख फ़रीद, पृ० 794)

I know the reason why. You have burned yourself in longing for the Lord. That is why you are so black.

बिरहिन ओदी लाकढ़ी, सपचे औ धुँधुआय।
छूट पड़ौं या बिरह से, जो सिगरो जरि जाय।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (विरह का अंग 30, पृ० 40)

This decorating of the body and these pretty clothes are useless as long as we do not meet our Lord. If my Lord were to see me in these beautiful clothes, they would be worth wearing. Otherwise, I should remove them and burn them.

चूड़ी पटकों पलँग से, चोली लाओं आगि।
जा कारन यह तन धरा, ना सूती गल लागि।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (विरह का अंग 35, पृ० 40)

I will throw away my bangles, the sign of my union, and will break them into pieces by striking them against my very bed if it is not in my fortune to meet my Beloved, for without that, they are useless to me.

In this intensity of love, the soul forgets the entire world. It cannot learn to stop thinking of the Lord, even for a single second. The Tenth Guru Gobind Singh says,

यारड़े दा सानूं सथरु चंगा भट्ठखेड़िया दा रहणा।।

-- दसम ग्रन्थ (ख्याल पातसाही 10, 1/1/6)

The thatched hut of the Lord of my heart is like heaven to me, but without Him even a palace is like a burning oven. (Sridasamgranth.org p.710)

A soul that is filled with love for the Lord does not, without Him, care for the finest silk or satin, but when she is in communion with Him, she is prepared to sleep even in the dust. In the Sikh Scriptures (the Adi Granth), there is a similar description, which says that if a wife be separated from her husband, she would break her very arms, as well as the bangles which adorn them. All these adornments are meaningless without the beloved.

A lover always wishes to go to the place of his beloved. Kabir says,

नैहरवा हमकाँ नहिं भावै।।
साँईं की नगरी परम अति सुन्दर, जहँ कोइ जान न आवै।।
चाँद सुरज जहँ पवन न पानी, को सँदेस पहुँचावै।।
दरद यह साईं को सुनावै।।

-- कबीर शब्दावली भाग-1 (पृ० 61)

My mind is being powerfully attracted to the Home of my Beloved. This world has no attraction for me. I wish to fly from here and go to the country of my Lord, which is so beautiful. There no one comes and goes (there is no birth and death).
And to it even the sun and the moon, water and the air can never reach. O, is there any-one who would carry this, my message of longing, to my Beloved!

Kabir also says,

पीर पुरानी विरह की, पिंजर पीर न जाय।
एक पीर है प्रीति की, रही कलेजे छाय।।
चोट सतावै बिरह की, सबतन जरजर होय।
मारनहारा जानही, कै जेहि लागी सोय।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (विरह का अंग 35, पृ० 40)

The ailment of virah (feeling of separation) is chronic and has now gone deep into my bones. It is not possible to get rid of it. It is a pain of love which is even smothering my heart.
The feeling of longing caused by separation troubles me at all times, and as a result my entire body is burning. Only one who has caused this pain or who undergoes it can understand this.

बिरह भुवंगम पैठि कै, किया कलेजे घाव।
बिरहिन अंग न मोड़िहै, ज्यों भावै त्यों खाव।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (विरह का अंग 60, 61, पृ० 33-34)

This longing and its accompanying pain have overpowered me like a serpent and have produced an abscess over my heart, but I do not try to save myself. I tell the serpent of intense longing to devour me in any manner it pleases.

देखत देखम दिन गया, निस भी देखत जाय।
बिरहनि पिय पावै नहीं, बेकल जिय घबराय।।
सो दिन कैसा होयगा, गुरू गहेंगे बाँहि।
अपना करि बैठावहीं, चरन कँवल की छाँहि।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (विरह का अंग 63, 65, पृ० 34)

The whole day is spent in looking towards the path from which my Beloved is to come, and the night is spent in the same manner. Unable to meet the Beloved, I am restless and my heart is troubled. That day will be an auspicious one when my Master will take me by the arm and make me His own. And I shall sit in the shade of His Lotus Feet.

Farid also describes the pain of separation from the Lord in his own poignant language:

फरीदा तनु सुका पिजरु थीआ तलीआं खूंडिह काग।।
अजै सु रबु न बाहुडिओ देखु बंदे के भाग।।
कागा करंग ढंढोलिआ सबला खाइआ मासु।।
ए दुइ नैना मति छुहउ पिर देखन की आस।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सलोक सेख फ़रीद, पृ० 1382)

O Farid, because of the fire of separation from the Lord, my body has dwindled to mere bone.

Now, even crows come and peck at me, and I tell them "O crows, you may eat my body but not my eyes, which are still longing hopefully to behold my Beloved."

फरीदा जि दिहि नाला कपिआ जे गलु कपही चुख।।
पवनि न इती मामले सहां न इती दुख।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सलोक सेख फ़रीद, पृ० 1381)

On the day of my birth, when my navel cord was cut by the midwife, it would have been better if she had also cut my throat, because then I would have been saved the pain of this separation.

Another Saint, Charan Das, says,

गद गद बानी कंठ में, आँसू टपकै नैन।
वह तो गिरहिन राम की, तलफत है दिन रैन।।

हाय हाय करि कब मिलैं, छाती फाटी जाय।
ऐसा दिन कब होयगा, दरसन करौं अघाय।।

-- चरनदास जी की बानी भाग-1 (पृ० 11)

My voice is choked in my throat, the tears are flowing from my eyes, and I am restless in the intense longing for my Beloved, day and night.

I am crying: 'When shall I meet my Lord? My chest is being torn. When will the day come when I will have the opportunity of meeting Him?

Meera Bai describes this state in the following words:

पानाँ ज्यूँ पीली पड़ी रे, लोग कहै पिंड रोग।
छाने लाँघन मैं किया रे, राम मिलण के जोग।।
बाबल बैद बुलाइया रे, पकड़ दिखाई म्हाँरी बाँह।
मूरख बैद मरम नहिं जाणे, करक कलेजे माँह।।
जाओ बैद घर आपणे रे, म्हाँरो नाँव न लेय।
मैं तो दाघी बिरह की रे, तू काहे कूँ औषद देय।।
माँस गलि गलि डीजिया रे, करक रह्या गल आहि।
आँगुलियाँ की मूँदड़ी, म्हारे आवण लागी बाँहि।।
रहु रहु पापी पपिहरा रे, पिव का नाम न लेय।
जे कोइ बिरहन साम्हले, तो पिव कारण जिव देय।।
खिण मन्दिर खिण आँगणे रे, खिण खिण ठाढ़ी होय।
घायल ज्यूँ घूमूँ खड़ी, म्हाँरी बिथा न बूझे कोय।।
काढ़ि कलेजो मैं धरूँ रे, कौवा तू ले जाय।
ज्याँ देसाँ म्हाँरो पिव बसै रे, वे देखत तू खाय।।
म्हाँरे नातो नाम को रे, और न नातो कोय।
मीरा ब्याकुल बिरहणी रे, पिय दरसण दीज्यो मोय।।

-- मीराबाई की शब्दावली (पृ० 9)

I have grown pale like a betel leaf. People think that I am ailing. I even fasted secretly in this separation from You.

My father called a doctor who felt my pulse. But the poor doctor cannot diagnose my malady. My trouble is in my heart.

O doctor, go back to your home and do not talk about me. I am burning on account of separation. What medicine can you give me!

My body has become only bones and my throat is choked with sighs. The ring on my finger can now fit over my wrist, I have grown so emaciated.

O Papiha (rain bird), please be silent. Do not talk of Peev (Beloved), for if any devotee suffering from Virah (intense longing of separation) for the Beloved were to hear the name of Peev, he would immediately renounce his life.

I am in one place now, and the next minute in another. I have no rest. I am like a person who has been stabbed, and no one can understand my condition of restlessness.

O crow, I am prepared to take out my heart and place it before you. Please take it to the place where my Beloved abides and eat it in His presence and before His eyes.

My only attachment is to Naam. I have no other connections. O Meera, I am restless in separation from my Beloved. O God, give me Thy Darshan.

चित्त चढ़ी मेरे माधुरि मूरत, उर बिच आन अड़ी।।
कैसे प्राण पिया बिनु राखूँ, जीवण मूर जड़ी।।
कब की ठाढ़ी पंथ निहारूँ, आपणे भवन खड़ी।।
मीरा प्रभु के हाथ बिकानी, लोक कहे बिगड़ी।।

-- मीराबाई की शब्दावली (पृ० 5)

My heart is full of the sweet picture of my Lord, and it has become entangled in it. How can I remain alive without my Beloved, because He is the healing herb that can save my life.

Standing on the roof of my house I am looking at the path along which You will come. Meera has sold herself to her Lord and people call her mad.

बिरहिन बैठी रङ्ग महल में, मोतियन की लड़ पोवै।।
इक बिरहिन हम ऐसी उेखी, अँसुअन की माला पोवै।।
तारा गिण गिण रैण बिहानी, सुख की घड़ी कब आवै।।
मीरा के प्रभु गिरधर नागर, मिल के बिछुड़ न जावै।।

-- मीराबाई की शब्दावली (पृ० 20)

One person suffering from separation sits in a palace and is happy making garlands of pearls. But there is another one. A virhan (one suffering from separation), who is making garlands of her tears. I have been counting the stars and passing the whole night in wakefulness. When will the time of happiness come, O God! My Lord, meet me and be never separated from me.

जब से तुम बिछुरे मेरे प्रभु जी, कबहुँ न पायों चैन।।
सबद सुनत मेरी छतियाँ कंपै, मीठे लगे तुम बैन।।

एक टकटकी पंथ निहारूँ, भई छमासी रैन।।
बिरह बिथा कासूँ कहूँ सजनी, बह गइ करवत अैन।।
मीरा के प्रभु कब रे मिलोगे, दुख मेटन सुख देन।।

-- मीराबाई की शब्दावली (पृ० 20)

O Lord, since you have been separated from me, I have been restless. If I listen to hymns in Your praise, my mind becomes restless, for I find solace only in songs of intense longing for You.
With my eyes unblinking I look at the path whence You will be coming and the night has become as long as half a year.
To whom should I tell my story of separation? O my friend, to whom should I relate the story of my separation and intense longing? It is cutting through my heart like a saw.
When will Meera's Lord meet her and give her joy by removing her anguish.

Shah Hussein describes the state of a person suffering from the pangs of separation in the following words:

सजण बिन रातीं हौईआं वड्डीयां।।
मास झड़े झड़ पिंजर होइआ कण कण होइआं हड्डीयां।।
इश्क़ छुपाइआँ छुपदा नाही बिरहुँ तणावाँ गड्डीयां ।।
रांझा जोगी मैं जुगिआणी कमली कर कर सदीआं।।
कहै हुसैन फ़क़ीर सांई दा, दासन तेरे लगीआं।।

-- शाह हुसैन (पृ० 110)

Without my Beloved the nights are very long.
The flesh is falling away from my body, and all my bones are exposed.
This love could not be concealed even if I wished to do so, for the intense longing due to separation is firmly established in me.
My Beloved is concealed in the garb of a mendicant, and I have also become a mendicant. The world calls me mad.
Hussein, the disciple of the Lord, says, 'I am attached to Thy Feet.'

Bulleh Shah spent many years of his life in separation from his Master and in intense longing for Him. He describes his condition in the following manner

अब लगन लगी की करीए? ना जी सकीए ते ना मरीए।।
तुम सुणो हमारे बैना।। मोहि रात दिन नहीं चैना।।
हुण पी बिन पलक न सरीए।। अब लगन लगी की करीए?

एह अगन बिरहुँ दी जारी।। कोई हमरी पीत निवारी।।
बिन दरशन कैसे तरीए। अब लगन लगी की करीए?
बुल्ले पई मुसीबत भारी।। कोई करो हमारी कारी।।
एह अजहे दुख कैसे जरीए। अब लगन लगी की करीए?

-- कुल्लियाते-बुल्लेशाह (पृ० 5)

Now I am feeling restless because of intense longing for my Lord. What should I do? I cannot live – I do not die.
Please listen to my sighs. There is no rest for me, either day or night.
Without my Beloved, my eyes do not close even for a single second. I am in such a state of intense longing. What should I do? Is there anyone who can burn away this state of longing and remove my pain?
How can I cross the ocean of life without His Darshan, for I have that longing and do not know what to do.
O Bulleh, I am in great distress. Come and help me, someone. How am I to remove this pain? I am in a state of intense longing. What should I do?

Hafiz also describes this state. He says,

मबाद किस चू मने–ख़स्ता मुब्तिलाए फ़िराक़,
किह् उम्रे–मन हमा बगुज़श्त दर बलाए फ़िराक़।
फ़िराक़ रा बफिराक़े–तू मुब्तिला साज़म,
चुनाकिह् ख़ून बचक़ानम ज़ि दीदहाए फ़िराक़।
मन अज़ कुज़ा ओ फ़िराक़ अज़ कुज़ा ओ ग़म ज़ि कुज़ा,
मगर किह् ज़ाद मरा मादर अज़ बराए फ़िराक़।
बदागे़–इश्क़–तू हाफ़िज़ चू बुलबुले–सहरी,
ज़नद बरोज़ो–शबां ख़ूंफ़िशां नवाए फ़िराक़।

-- दीवाने-हाफ़िज़ (पृ० 273)

O my friends, I wish that no one should be a victim of such a state of agony as is mine because of intense longing due to separation. If it were possible to take hold of this feeling of intense longing, I would have covered my Lord with it so that He should also know what intense longing is, and His eyes would also shed tears of blood and fire in the pangs of separation. But alas! This is not possible. I am full of pain and the feeling of intense longing is too much for me. Perhaps my mother gave birth to me so that I should suffer this intense longing. O my God, in my love for

You, I am like a nightingale singing songs of lamentation, which bring tears of blood to my eyes.

ज़बाने–ख़ामा नदारद सरे–बयाने–फ़िराक़,
वगरना शरह दिहम बा तू दास्ताने–फ़िराक़।
बसे नमांद किह् किश्तीए–उम्र ग़रक़ा शवद,
ज़ि मौजे–शौक़े–तू दर बहरे–बेकराने–फ़िराक़।
फलक चू दीद सरम रा असीरे–चंबरे–इश्क़,
ब–बस्त गरदने–सब्रम बरीसमाने–फ़िराक़।
फ़िराक़ ओ हिज्र किह् आवर्द दर जहां या रब्ब,
किह् रूए हिज्र सियाह बाद ओ ख़ानमाने–फ़िराक़।

-- दीवाने-हाफ़िज़ (पृ० 272)

My pen does not have the ability to describe my condition of intense longing due to separation. The waves rising out of the fathomless ocean of intense longing have swept over the heads of people who were anxious to meet the Lord, but the voyage of their boat of life was finished in this manner. When fate found that my mind and heart were captures by the love of my Lord, it tied the rope of anguish of intense longing round my neck, by which it is neither possible to live nor to die. O God, by whom were separation and intense longing brought into this world? The face of this separation should be blackened, and the intense longing should be broken.

क़रार ओ ख़्वाब ज़ि हाफ़िज़ तमअ मदार ऐ दोस्त,
क़रार चीस्त सबूरी कुदाम ओ ख़्वाब कुजा।

-- दीवाने-हाफ़िज़ (पृ० 39)

Because of longing in separation, sleep, rest and passions all die out.

मरा दर्द ईस्त अंदर दिल अगर गोयम ज़बां सूज़द,
वगर दम दर कशम तरसम किह् मग़्ज़े–उस्तुख़्वां सूज़द।

In my mind the pain of separation is so intense that my tongue would be burned if I wished to talk about it. And if I remain silent, I fear that my bones will be consumed by this fire.

Buddha sought refuge in the jungles in search of the Truth, and his body became extremely emaciated. Likewise, we may study the life of any other Saint and we will find the same account of intense longing due to separation. Whoever has travelled the path of God-realization had to cross the river

of sighs before he could meet Him. It is indeed true that one has to tread that path through tears. Maulana Rumi says,

मी रसी दर कअबा ज़ाहिद गर रवी राहे–तरी,
जुहदे ख़ुश्क़–ओ–सौमे–तू बे दीदाए गिरयां अबस।

O man, if you wish to reach the Home of God, you should go by way of the ocean of tears, for it is only in that way that you will be able to reach Him. Dry prayers, dry counting of beads, dry reading of Scriptures, and dry eyes as well as dry heart – all these are like going along a barren path towards God. But if you had gone through water (tears), you would have reached without any difficulty.

हेच मीदानी चिह् मीगोयद रबाब,
ज़ि अशके–चश्म ओ अज़ जिगरहाए कबाब।

What does the rabbab (a kind of violin) say? It tells of the burning of the heart and the tears of the eyes.

Shams-i-Tabriz says,

हर आं चश्मे किह् गिरयां अस्त दर इश्क़ दिलारामे,
बशारत आयदश रोज़े ज़ि वसले–ऊ ब पैग़ामे।
मिसाले–नर्दबां बाशद बनालीदन बइश्क़ अंदर,
चू अबरो–नर्दबां कोशद रसद नागाह बर बामे।
किह् आबे–लुत्फ़े–आं–दिलबर गिरिफ़्ता काफ़ ता काफ़ अस्त,
अज़ आन अस्त आतिशे हिज्रां किह् ता पुख़्ता शवद ख़ामे।।

-- कुल्लियाते-शम्स तब्रेज़ (पृ० 799)

Those eyes which are weeping for the Darshan (sight) of the Beloved will one day surely behold Him. In love, weeping acts as a ladder. When you make a ladder of your eyes, then you will automatically be speeding towards the sky. The Ocean of the Beloved's Grace reaches from one end to the other, and no place is without it. But this fire of intense longing due to separation is for the purpose of ripening the faith of the followers on this path.

Maulana Rumi again mentions the need for intense longing in separation in the following words:

तू नमीदानी किह् दाया दाएगां, कम दिहद बे–गिरया शीर ऊ राएगां।
गिरयाए अबरस्त ओ सोज़े–आफ़ताब, उस्तने–दुनिया हमीं दो रिश्ता ताब।

-- मसनवी मौलाना रूमी (दफ़्तर 5, पृ० 27)

Look at the nurses who feed babies with their milk. They give the infant scarcely any milk unless it cries for it, because the milk in

the breasts of the nurse does not flow out unless the child attracts it by its cries. In the same manner, so long as a devotee does not cry while praying to Him, the ocean of the Lord's Grace does not surge out.

Maulana Rumi further says,

Weeping is like the clouds, and longing is like the heat of the sun. Just as the sun's heat is the cause of bringing rains from the clouds, by which this world remains in existence; similarly, separation, longing for Him and restlessness – all these are like fires which make the currents of grace and mercy of God burst out, as the rain does from the clouds, and pacify the hearts of devotees. Tears in the eyes and pain in the heart are the two pillars between which we pass to go within.

Weeping over separation and anguish of the heart are two signs of meeting God. When Rabia Basri was asked whether she said her prayers before or after meeting God, she replied, God comes first, and then I pray to Him. The people then asked,

How are you aware that He is coming?

Her answer was:

When through His remembrance and attraction a current of restlessness is awakened in me, the tears flow from my eyes. He thus touches my soul with love and constantly pulls me towards Him. These are the indications of His coming. Then I bow in prayer before Him.

True prayer is one by which a feeling of ecstasy is created in the soul. Such a counting of just one bead, has the effect of thousands of bead countings, because the rosary is being rotated by the longing and anguish of the mind. You need remember Him only once, but it should be with so much real love that every cell of your body speaks out through your tongue, and whatever you think or speak or pray comes from the heart. The body and the mind should be numb. When those, who are extremely devoted to the Beloved, bow in reverence to Him, that is true prayer.

A true heart and a current of intense anguish are the true Scriptures, which they study daily. The language of

lovers is entirely different form that of other people. They consider it to be a work of thieves to pray and worship merely for show and as a formal duty. Such people are far removed from God and are entangled in physical pleasures. The truth is "A preacher is only anxious about his prayer, but the lover longs for that sight of his Beloved." God is in every cell of the lover, and when he bows his head before Him in this state, it is impossible for him to lift his head, for the Beloved is in every nerve of his body.

ख़बर नहीं है तनो–बदन की, कि अपने आपे से जा चुके हैं,
कहां है सब्रो–क़रार दिल में, जो दिल किसी से लगा चुके हैं।

Those who have lost themselves in Him are numb in mind and body. Those who have given their love to someone are filled with longing in their mind.

Through longing caused by separation a devotee washes away his bad thoughts with his hot tears, and remembrance of the Lord takes their place. But this longing can be awakened only by true love, and not by crocodile tears.

Such a noble and rewarding longing is awakened only in the hearts of those, who have pure and unadulterated love for the physical manifestation of God – namely, the Living Master.

A disciple must have true spiritual love for the physical form of his Master. And when he sees the resplendent form of the Master inside by means of the spiritual practice performed with love, he is then attached to that unique form also, and to the Shabd (Sound Current, Word) emanating from it. He would never wish to be separated from this. By separation from the physical form of the Master, longing is produced to meet Him inside. And when a devotee does not see the form inside, the absence of the form produces a great restlessness and anguish in the mind.

मै हरि नामै हरि बिरहु लगाई जीउ।।
मेरा हरि प्रभु मितु मिलै सुखु पाई जीउ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (गउड़ी माझ म० 4, पृ० 175)

I have fixed my love and longing on meeting Hari (God). I shall be happy only when I meet my friend and Lord Hari.

अजु न सुती कंत सिउ अंगु मुड़े मुड़ि जाइ।।
जाइ पुछहु डोहागणी तुम किउ रैणि विहाइ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सलोक सेख फ़रीद, पृ० 1379)

Last night, throughout the night, I could not sleep with my Beloved (He did not come to me), and every part of my body is aching. If this is my condition after His absence for one night, what is the state of those who never meet Him, and how do they pass their nights? (Sheikh Farid)

Just as the heat of the sun helps in ripening sweet fruit, and the heat of the fire in the hearth enables one to prepare delicious food, in the same way, the heat of longing plays a vital role in helping the devotee on the path of spiritual attainment. It is actually a touchstone or test of love, and at the same time, it purifies the devotee's love and devotion, as a goldsmith purifies a piece of gold by putting it in the fire. Hafiz says,

हाफ़िज़ ज़ि दीदा दानाए–अश्के हमी फ़िशां,
शायद किह् मुर्ग़े–वसल कुनद क़स्दे–दामे–मा।

-- दीवाने-हाफ़िज़ (पृ० 36)

You should shed tears of pearls from your moist eyes. Perhaps He, in the form of a swan, may be caught by you when this swan is tempted to come to you to eat these pearls.

Maulana Rumi says,

ऐ दरेग़ा अश्के–मन दरया बुदे, ता निसारे–दिलबरे–ज़ीबा बुदे।

-- मसनवी मौलाना रूमी (दफ़्तर 1, पृ० 193)

I wish that I had wept so much in my longing to meet the Lord that the tears from my eyes had swelled into a river, and every tear drop had turned into a spiritual pearl. Then I would have placed all those pearls before the altar of my Beloved.

He also says,

बहरे–गिरया आदम आमद बर ज़मीं, ता बुवद गिरयां–ओ–नालां–ओ हज़ीं।

-- मसनवी मौलाना रूमी (दफ़्तर 1, पृ० 186)

Man's work in this world is nothing but to cry in intense longing due to separation from the Lord. Look at the infant. It cries as soon as it is born. It comes into the world crying.

अश्क मीबारो–हमी सोज़ अज़ तलब, हमचू शमअ–ए–सरबुरीदा नीम शब।
ता बराबर मीकुनद शाहे मजीद, अश्क रा दर वज़न बा ख़ूने–शहीद।

-- मसनवी मौलाना रूमी

Therefore, just as a light burns throughout the night, in the same manner you should shed tears after midnight in longing for the Lord, and continue weeping and asking for His Light. Just as the wick of a lamp is trimmed, similarly you should trim the wick of your head (ego) so that the Light in you increases. In other words, as soon as you learn to sigh while you are weeping, there will be a flood of Light inside. God values the tears of His lovers as He does the blood of His martyrs.

Separation is extremely helpful in kindling the fire of restlessness, and thereby obtaining the fruit of spirituality.

तनु तपै तनूर जिउ बालणु हड बलंन्हि।।
पैरी थकां सिरि जुलां जे मूं पिरी मिलन्हि।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सलोक सेख फ़रीद, पृ० 1384)

If the body burns like an oven the bones are ignited like wood, and the feet are blistered from walking, still a true devotee will not remain away from the Lord, even if he may have to continue his journey by walking on his head. (Farid)

A lover of the Lord, who is separated from Him, does not feel close to anyone or anything else. Even his life seems to be a burden to him, and he feels as if he is dying. Guru Angad says,

जिसु पिआरे सिउ नेहु तिसु आगै मरि चलीऐ।।
ध्रिगु जीवणु संसारि ता कै पाछै जीवणा।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सिरीराग की वार म० 2, पृ० 83)

If we love someone, we should die before he dies, because it is a sin to live after the death of one's beloved.

When Khwaja Mohammed came to the tomb of his Master, Hazrat Zarzari Zarbaksh, he fell lifeless upon the tomb, overcome by sorrow and intense anguish because of separation from him. But before he died, he recited the following couplet:

अज़ यार–ग़ार मांदन तनहा बग़ार ऊला।
बे यार ज़िंदा बूदन मुर्दन हज़ार ऊला।

-- हज़रत ज़रज़री ज़रबख़्श

It is better to die than to live without one's Beloved. It is a thousand times better to make a sacrifice of one's self if deprived of the presence of the Beloved.

The pain of separation is like the poison of a cobra. Once it enters anyone's heart, it is not possible to get rid of it by any means, unless one meets the Master. There is no other method.

कबीर बिरहु भुयंगमु मनि बसै मंतु न मानै कोइ।।
राम बिओगी ना जीऐ जीऐ त बउरा होइ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सलोक भगत कबीर, पृ० 1368)

It is true that life is impossible for one who has intense longing because of separation from Ram (God). If he does live, he wastes his life like a mad man in this world. (Kabir)

If the Lord is not reached, then everything – food, clothing and all other comforts in this world are useless. Guru Arjun says,

धणी विहूणा पाट पटंबर भाही सेती जाले।।
धूडी विचि लुडंदडी सोहां नानक तै सह नाले।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (वारां ते वधीक म० 5, पृ० 1425)

Without the Lord, everything is useless, just as silken dresses should be thrown into the fire by a bride after the death of her husband.

But if one is in communion with the Lord, he is praise-worthy in all conditions of life; just as a bride would be happy and would look beautiful, even if she were lying in the dust.

The fact is that without having an intense longing for the Lord, this physical body is useless. If the object of our coming into this world is not achieved, what is the use of the body? Guru Angad says,

जो सिरु सांई ना निवै सो सिरु दीजै डारि।।
नानक जिसु पिंजर महि बिरहा नही सो पिंजरु लै जारि।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सिरीराग की वार म० 2, पृ० 89)

A head which does not bow in reverence to the Lord should be cut into pieces. The body which has not entertained a desire to meet the Lord should be burned.

Farid says,

बिरहा बिरहा आखीऐ बिरहा तू सुलतानु।।
फरीदा जितु तनि बिरहु न ऊपजै सो तनु जाणु मसानु।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सलोक सेख फ़रीद, पृ० 1379)

We all call, 'Virah, Virah' (intense longing due to separation); but Virah is the king of all emotions. O Farid, a person who is without intense longing is like a graveyard.

Another lover of God says,

बशिकनद आं सर किह् दर क़दमे–यार ख़म नशुद।

The head, which does not bow at the feet of the Lord, should be broken (is useless).

Intense longing has a very deep influence because of its powerful current of energy. Once it is established, no other impressions can enter the mind. Such a devotee completely forgets his body and his clothes, because he is being pulled by the magnet of the remembrance of his Lord, and his mind is completely absorbed in contemplation of the Lord. If we are being pulled towards something or somebody all the time, we will ultimately merge into that form.

There are innumerable people in the world who are longing for worldly objects, but in this longing they are interested only in material things. It is most difficult for people of this kind to follow the path of Sant-Mat. There is no worldly method, by which one can find release from this world. All longings are worthless, with the exception of an intense longing for the Lord. All others lead to distraction.

Yet most of the people in the world are engrossed in the desire for material gains. They do not listen to discourses on the subjects of Spirituality and meeting the Lord, nor do they have any desire to meet Him, because their eyes are closed and they cannot see anything in its true perspective.

Majnu was fully absorbed in the remembrance of his beloved Laila. His religion, his belief, was nothing but Laila. He would follow wherever she had walked, and would bow his head over her footprints. Somebody once told Majnu that God wanted to meet him. He replied:

If He wishes to meet me, let Him come in the form of Laila.

Guru Ram Das says,

सतिगुरु बिरही नाम का जे मिलै त तनु मनु देउ।।
जे पूरबि होवै लिखिआ ता अंमृतु सहजि पीएउ।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सूही म० 4, पृ० 758)

The True Guru is the Lover of the Naam, the Name of the Lord. Meeting Him, I dedicate my body and mind to Him. And if it is so pre-ordained, then I shall quqff the Ambrosial Nectar.The mind is so much engrossed in worldly pursuits that it is not prepared to listen to anything else.

The longing, of a physical nature, that existed between Manu and Laila very rarely turns into a spiritual longing; but if it does, the people to whom this happens are indeed blessed. Actually, true and real longing is established only when we have a longing for the Lord or His embodiment, the Master. It is therefore essential that we find a Master, who practices and preaches Naam, because without this, it is impossible to achieve the highest goal of Spirituality. If we find such a Master, we should sacrifice everything at his feet.

Longing does not necessarily create only pain and sorrow. It is a unique intoxication of the mind, because one is not willing under any circumstances to banish it, even at the cost of innumerable hardships. We offer our hearty congratulations to anyone who has established within himself the feeling of intense longing for the Lord because such a one is a leader of souls in the Court of the Lord.

What are the signs of Virah (intense longing)?

Kabir says,

नाम बियोगी बिकल तन, ताहि न चीन्है कोय।
तम्बोली का पान ज्यों, दिन दिन पीला होय।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (विरह का अंग 9, पृ० 38)

One who is in such a state becomes extremely emaciated, even beyond recognition, and daily he grows pale, like the betel leaf.

Sant Charan Das says,

मुख पियरो सूखे अधर, आँखे खरी उदास।
आह जो निकसै दुख भरी, गहिरे लेत उसास।

-- चरनदास जी की बानी भाग-1 (पृ० 11)

The face is pale, the body is emaciated, the eyes are sad, and the sigh which is breathed out is full of grief. He sighs deeply with every breath.

Maulana Rumi says,

मरा गर न दानी बपुर्सी ज़ि शबहा।
बपुर्सी ज़ि रुख़े–ज़र्द ओ ख़ुश्की–ए–लबहा।

-- मौलाना रूमी

If you do not know me, then ask those who are crying because of separation. You should ask my pale face and my dry lips, then you would know my real condition.

Shams Tabriz told Maulana Rumi:

आशिकां रा नुह निशान अस्त ऐ पिसर।
आह सर्द ओ रंग ज़र्द ओ चश्म तर।
कम ख़ुर्दन ओ कम गुफ़्तन ओ ख़्वाबश हराम।
बेक़रारी ज़ारी ओ नाला मुदाम।

-- शम्स तब्रेज़

O my son, there are nine signs which distinguish the lovers of God:

1. *He heaves cold sighs.*

2. *The face is pale. The devotee wishes to have communion with the Lord but it is not in his power. Every time he thinks of the Lord he cries out and the tear drops from his eyes are hardly able to extinguish the burning fire in his heart.*

3. *The eyes are always wet.*

4. *He eats sparingly.*

5. *He sleeps little.*

6. *Deep sleep does not come to him.*

7. *He sighs continually.*

8. *He is restless (impatient to behold the Lord).*

9. *He moans continually.*

हिरदे भीतर दव बलै, धुवाँ न परगट होय।
जा के लागी सो लखै, की जिन लाई सोय।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (बिरह का अंग 48, पृ० 31)

When the fire of separation kindles in the heart and the smoke from it is not visible, only he who has experienced it, or who has kindled it, knows it is there. Only one who has been wounded knows the pain. No one else does. (Kabir)

तन भतर मन मानिया, बाहर कहूँ न लाग,
ज्वाला तें फिर जल भया, बुझी जलन्ती आग।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (बिरह का अंग 67, पृ० 34)

This fire burns within, not outside, and it produces water in the form of tears which try to extinguish the fire. (Kabir)

The remedy for one, who is in this state of suffering, lies in the hands of the Beloved. He alone can remove it by granting His Darshan (by meeting him). Dadu says,

दादू बिरहिनी दुख कासनि कहै, कासनि देइ सँदेस।
पंथ निहारत पीव का, बिरहिनि पलटे केस।।

-- दादू दयाल की बानी भाग-1 (बिरह को अंग 5, पृ० 30)

To whom shall I disclose my pain, and by whom shall I send my message? Even my hair has become tangled by the constant movement of my head while searching for the path whence my Beloved may come.

ना वहु मिलै न मैं सुखी, कहु क्यूँ जीवन होइ।
जन मुझ कौं घायल किया, मेरो दारू सोइ।।

-- दादू दयाल की बानी भाग-1 (बिरह को अंग 15, पृ० 31)

I cannot meet Him and I am not happy. How can one live in such a state? The remedy lies in Him who has given me this pain.

दीन दुनी सदकै करौं, टुक देखण दे दीदार।
तन मन भी छिन छिन करौं, भिस्त दोजग भी वार।।

-- दादू दयाल की बानी भाग-1 (बिरह को अंग 15, पृ० 31)

I am prepared to sacrifice the world and everything else for a single second's sight of my Lord. I am also prepared to cut my mind and my body into small pieces, and would sacrifice both heaven and hell for Him.

Khusro Sahib says the same thing:

अज़ सरे–बालीने–मन बरख़ेज़ ऐ नादां तबीब,
दर्दमंदे–इश्क़ रा दारू बजुज़ दीदार नीस्त।

-- अमीर ख़ुसरो

O ignorant doctor! Please leave my bedside for there is no remedy for separation except His Darshan.

The longing due to separation from the Lord has a unique sweetness. Those who are blindly following the dictates of the mind and are fully entrenched in the worldly luxuries of eat, drink and be merry cannot experience that sweet taste, just as a blind person cannot appreciate the fall of tears in weeping. Intense longing and crying for the Lord always turn into happiness. They are really blessed, who are so fortunate as to be gifted with

this condition. In the Sikh Scriptures, we find references to the various fruits of longing due to separation. Kabir says,

बिरहा आया दरद सों, कड़ुवा लागा काम।
काया लागी काल ह्वै, मीठा लागा नाम।।

-- सद्गुरु कबीर का साखी ग्रन्थ भाग-2 (लगनी को अंग 25, पृ० 162)

In the state of longing and its pain, the things of the world appear bitter. Only the Name of the Lord is sweet. When this longing is produced in a person, he becomes eligible to merge in the Truth.

Longing produces love and veneration for the Beloved. God is love; therefore, the devotee comes nearer to the Lord in proportion to the degree of his longing. He also realizes in greater degree the value of his Beloved, so much so that the pure and noble form of the Beloved is always fixed in his mind. Sheikh Farid says,

कागा चूंडि न पिंजरा बसै त उडरि जाहि।।
जितु पिंजरै मेरा सहु वसै मासु न तिदू खाहि।।

-- आदि ग्रन्थ (सलोक सेख फ़रीद, पृ० 1382)

O crow, do not eat my body with your beak. Fly away from here because in this body resides my beloved Lord, and you have no right to eat such flesh.

Kabir says,

साईं सेवत जल गई, मास न रहिया देंह।
साईं जब लगि सेइहों यह तन होय न खेह।।

-- कबीर साखी संग्रह भाग-1 (विरह का अंग 58, पृ० 33)

In my longing for the Lord, all the flesh of my body is emaciated. But so long as I remember Him, this body will not be lost. m